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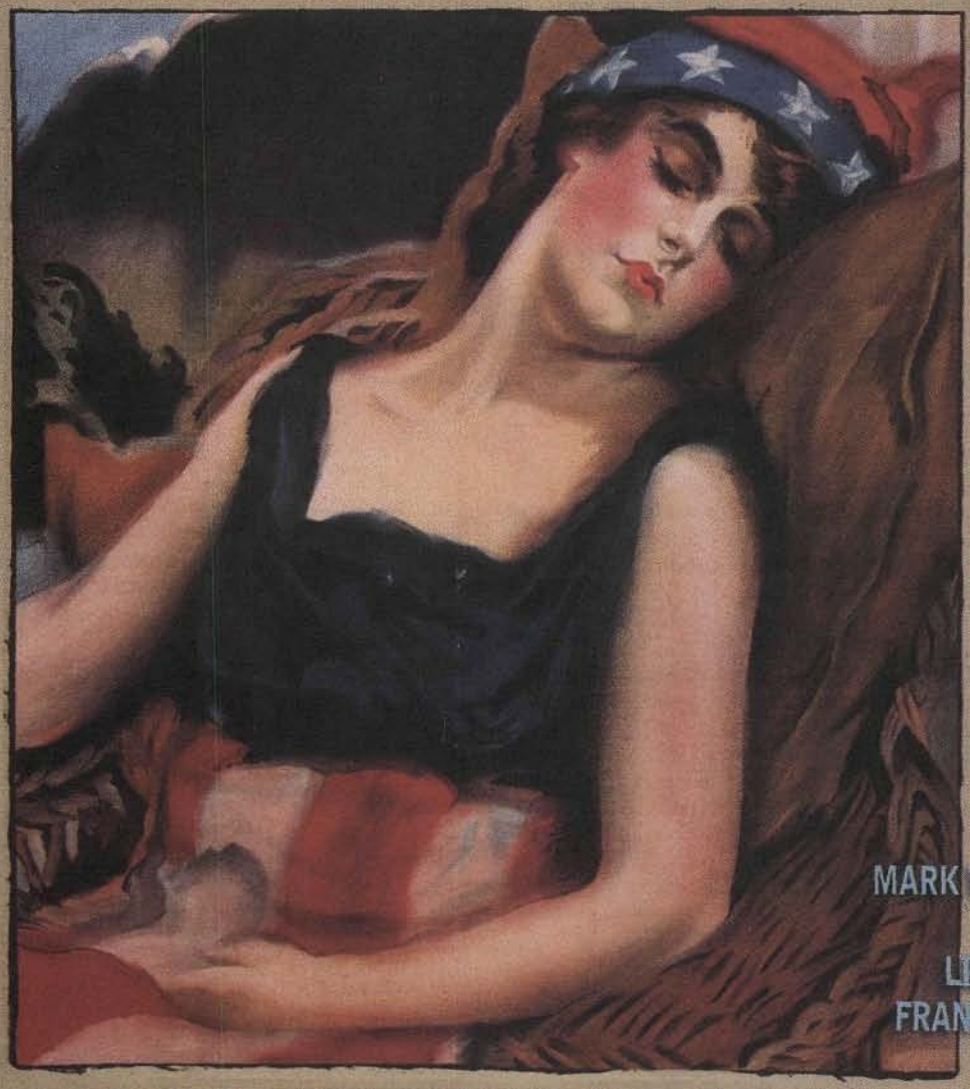

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT!

THE FOOD ISSUE

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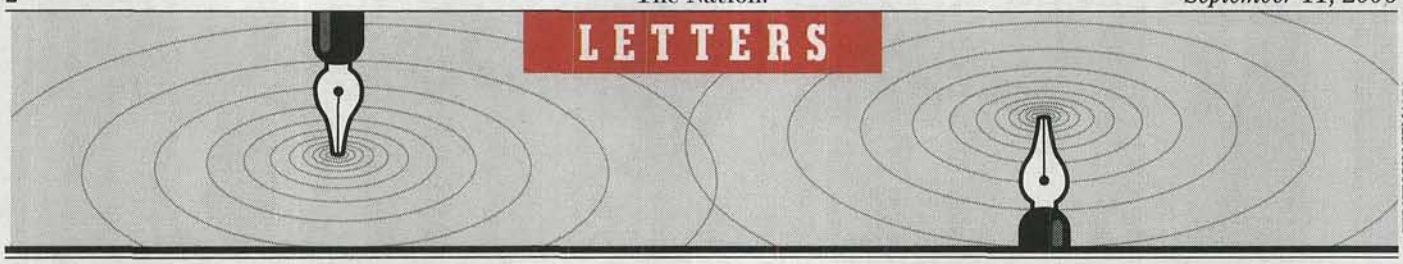

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Four-Star Food Favorites

No sooner had we pressed "send" on an e-mail inviting readers to tell us about their most beloved food institutions than enthusiastic submissions began to pour in from all over the country. Many readers raved about their neighborhood co-ops, community gardens and farmers' markets. Others paid tribute to quirky connoisseurs, one-of-a-kind eateries and various sources of culinary inspiration. Below, a flavorful sample. —The Editors

Brooklyn, NY

■ The best place in New England for corn and tomatoes in August is Pete's Stand on Route 12 in Walpole, New Hampshire. A family-run operation, the tiny stand is not organic, biodynamic or otherwise fancy. Tourists pull in to the dusty parking lot, only to find themselves elbow to elbow with tiny old Polish women who might be overheard sharing a *gulumpke* recipe while routing through the green beans, selecting a pound one bean at a time. Pete, whose World War II stories, taunts and bright cackling laughter alternately delighted and infuriated customers for more than twenty years, died nearly a decade ago. Pete's son Mike and Mike's son John carry on the family business in a much quieter manner, but they still plant cabbages for the Polish ladies and take orders for bushels of overripe cucumbers from avid picklers. There are no heirloom tomatoes, ramps or fresh herbs at Pete's Stand. Instead, there are vegetables for the community they are grown in, a relationship between three generations and one stretch of fertile ground, and the memory of Pete bellowing, "No stripping the corn!" in English, Polish and, when appropriate, Ukrainian. ANNALIESE GRIFFIN

Columbia, Mo.

■ Columbia is home to an amazing market called The Root Cellar. It's like our farmers' market, but you can shop there every day. All the produce, meat, cheeses and a variety of other foods and goods are local and organic. It has even expanded into a restaurant with about eight tables, serving breakfast and lunch. Again, everything is locally produced—right down to the ketchup! The Root Cellar has transcended my need for an ethical food shopping experience with its worker food-exchange program, which employs folks by paying them with groceries. As someone who has anxiety attacks when writing checks to any corporate chain, I gladly spend my modest food budget there. ELIZABETH PICKENS

Lancaster, Pa.

■ The food at the Central Market in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, stands for something much greater. Lancaster and its marketplace were deeded in 1730 from the same plot of land; by the terms of the land grant, city and market together established the common rights of all members of the settlement not only to food but, more broadly, to a realm of civil order where agriculture, commerce, health and sociability all become fundamentally public concerns. Nearly 300 years later, the Central Market remains the heart of community life here. Its survival asserts that with the authority of government comes the responsibility for sustaining the well-being of all citizens. For me, market days are hopeful moments in grim times. When I buy my food at the Central Market, I am returning to the ground on which this city was born, in a sense affirming a centuries-old commitment to a civic life built on the ideals of peace and shared wealth. LINDA ALECI

Summerville, SC

■ Bridges Barbecue Lodge in Shelby, North Carolina, will always be at the top of my list. It's touchy to talk about barbecue in North Carolina—there's a hard, long-running battle between Lexington-style (moist but not wet chunks or slices of pit-cooked pig with tomato/vinegar sauce) and what they serve in the eastern part of the state (mushy pork, vinegary sauce). Bridges's is Lexington-style, chopped with chunks and cooked on hickory in pits out back. A key feature is the coleslaw, made with barbecue sauce instead of mayonnaise and served right on your sandwich. I haven't lived in Shelby in twenty-one years, but Bridges's phone number is still on speed dial on my cellphone, and I pick some up whenever I'm headed that way. JANE KLEINE

Irvine, Calif.

■ Wyoming is one of the few states that still support Bush, and Jackson is the summer watering hole of Dick and Lynne Cheney. Between Republican steakhouses and fast food for the plebeians on vacation, there isn't much—but there is the Harvest Cafe, a cheerfully defiant counterculture spot. Memorable homemade pie, good organic salads and strong espresso, plus couches to sit on, New Age magazines to read and live music at night—if it can happen here, it can happen anywhere. JON WIENER

St. Peter, Minn.

■ Patrick Moore, the cheesemonger at the original store in the Lunds supermarket chain, is an erudite cheese expert who is also utterly devoid of attitude. Every time my partner and I enter Patrick's domain, he greets us with enthusiasm and starts pulling out his latest "finds"—which always come complete with a story. On our last visit, he presented us with a piece of smoked chèvre—yep, smoked chèvre—that he'd procured at a small cheese-making operation in central Massachusetts. "You're not gonna believe how this guy smokes this cheese," he began, and we were off to the races. From his pungent lair on Lake Street in Minneapolis, Patrick Moore is doing his best to make Velveeta a four-letter word. LISA HELDKE

New York City

■ As a home cook and full-time father of a 2-year-old girl and a 1-year-old boy, there is no place I'd rather be in New York than the Union Square Farmers' Market. I take the kids there three days a week to meet their mom for lunch, and then I do that day's shopping before taking the kids home for their afternoon naps. It's true to say that if it weren't for the market and what it offers me (fresh, local, seasonal food) and the children (a leisurely and sensual relationship to food, plus free samples!), I'd find living here excruciating. DIMITRIOS GATSIOUNIS

Ashland, Ore.

■ By far our favorite food institution is our home garden, which provides healthy and safe produce for our family while reducing our reliance on grocery shopping and fossil fuels necessary for food distribution. We continue to be amazed by how much food we can produce year-round on a small piece of ground that sees snow frequently in winter. DAVID & LINDA YOUNG

Collegeville, Pa.

■ We don't have the time or the acreage to grow a big garden ourselves, so we were delighted to find the Charlestown Cooperative Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture farm in southeast Pennsylvania, about twenty minutes from our home. For a modest annual fee, we get to pick up our weekly share of fresh organic produce from June to November. The farm also allows us to introduce our 2-year-old son to the land, to good food and to the wonderful farmers who grow our vegetables. In addition to the food, there is a wonderful community that has grown up with the farm, with cooking demonstrations, potluck suppers, a food-related book club, films about food politics and an annual barn dance to celebrate the harvest. The farm provides much more than food—it has nourished our family in every sense of the word.

KARIN SCONZERT & TIMOTHY MORTON

Ringwood, NJ

■ What embodies the best of our food culture? Easy—a radio show called *The Restaurant Guys*, hosted by the co-owners of two New Jersey res-

(Continued on Page 40)

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IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 283, NUMBER 7

LETTERS

2 FOUR-STAR FOOD FAVORITES
Readers share their beloved food institutions.

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 DEBATING SECURITY

4 FALLOUT IN ISRAEL
Eyal Press

5 THE FOOD ISSUE

6 CEDAR DEVOLUTION
Joseph Logan

8 DOROTHY HEALEY
Mike Davis

COLUMNS

8 DEADLINE POET
Presidential Eating Preferences
Calvin Trillin

10 BEAT THE DEVIL
Israel on the Slide: Who's to Blame?
Alexander Cockburn

12 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Wrong War, Wrong Word
Katha Pollitt

ARTICLES

13 SLOW FOOD NATION
Alice Waters

14 ONE THING TO DO ABOUT FOOD: A FORUM
Eric Schlosser, Marion Nestle, Michael Pollan, Wendell Berry, Troy Duster & Elizabeth Ransom, Winona LaDuke, Peter Singer, Vandana Shiva, Carlo Petrini, Eliot Coleman, Jim Hightower

21 ORGANIC FARMS: HARD LABOR
Felicia Mello

28 SMITHFIELD: HOG HELL
Eric Schlosser

31 WAL-MART: MEAN OR GREEN?
Liza Featherstone

32 MONSANTOPOLY: GMO GIANT
Anna Lappé & Matthew Willse

35 ANN COOPER: DOING LUNCH
Anna Lappé

35 EDIBLE NOLA
Randy Fertel

36 HOW HARLEM EATS
Mark Winston Griffith

37 BLACK FARMS, BLACK MARKETS
Habiba Alcindor

39 A RIGHT TO FOOD?
Frances Moore Lappé

BOOKS & THE ARTS

41 CHILD WITH PRUD'HOMME: My Life in France
BOURDAIN: The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones
BUFORD: Heat: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany
Matthew DeBord

45 CAMPBELL: Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005
GAINES: American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era
ESHUN: Black Gold of the Sun: Searching for Home in Africa and Beyond
Hazel Rowley

50 FILMS
World Trade Center
Stuart Klawans

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EDITORIALS

Debating Security

Having announced several months ago that they would make national security the pivotal issue of the 2006 Congressional election, Republican strategists are now having trouble getting the Administration's talking points straight. With Iraq dragging down the President's poll numbers and with Hezbollah winning the public relations war in the Middle East, Republican pundits and officials like Dick Cheney and RNC chairman Ken Mehlman have seized on London's recent arrest of twenty-three British citizens who were allegedly planning to blow up planes across the Atlantic. But the news that law enforcement stopped a terrorist plot and that young British Muslims have been radicalized by British and American policies does not make for natural GOP talking points. Many of the Republican spokespeople playing up the arrests are the same ones who ridiculed John Kerry just two years ago for saying the fight against terrorism should be primarily a matter of law enforcement and intelligence gathering. Law enforcement, we were told, was for wimps. Real men took the "war on terror" to the terrorists themselves.

In fact, one of the more popular Republican mantras has been that "we are fighting them over there so we don't have to fight them here." Thus Iraq was said to be the central front in the war on terror. But there is increasing evidence, backed up by British and US intelligence studies, that the war has not only been a training ground for terrorist fighters in the region but has greatly increased the number of would-be terrorists in places like Britain.

Yes, by all means, let us debate national security, and whether Bush Administration policies have made us more secure. In his latest press conference, Bush insisted that it would be a "huge mistake" to leave Iraq. But Bush and those Republicans who continue to support the war—along with Joe Lieberman, now running as an independent—have a lot to account for: 2,600 Americans killed, more than 18,000 wounded, upwards of $1 trillion in direct and indirect costs, untold Iraqi civilian deaths, the unprecedented loss of US power and influence in the region, the diversion and exhaustion of US military capabilities and the elevation of Iran as a regional power. As a result, US forces are now trapped in the middle of a civil war, the target of both Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias, trying to protect a government loosely aligned with Iran and openly sympathetic to Hezbollah.

The Bush Administration (and, unfortunately, too much of the Democratic opposition) also has much to account for with regard to its unconditional support of Israel's iron-fist policy toward the Palestinians and Lebanon. The road to peace and democracy in the Middle East, we were told, ran through Baghdad. Once the regime of Saddam Hussein was eliminated and democracy established in Iraq, the Palestinians would have no choice but to accept Israel's preferred solution to Palestine. Yet Israel's effort to impose its solution was met not with Palestinian compliance but with the election of Hamas and even more resistance. The escalating vio-

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lence has been the predictable result of the Israeli and US policy of seeking to prevent Hamas from governing.

As a result of Israel's barbaric bombing of Lebanon, Israel and the United States are now more hated and despised than ever in the Arab world. America's moderate Arab allies are on the defensive, worried about the increase in Iranian influence, on the one hand, and the growing discontent of their own populations, on the other. Islamist groups are on the rise in much of the region. And, given the Administration's seeming determination to escalate its war against what it calls Islamo-fascism, the prospects for even greater furies, including a showdown over Iran's nuclear program, are on the horizon.

A more sensible course than the Administration's ever-escalating war on terror would be a serious diplomatic effort to address the legitimate grievances of the Islamic world, beginning with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the US occupation of Iraq, combined with an effort to expand law enforcement and intelligence cooperation with other countries. By denying Islamic extremists the imperial enemy they need to succeed, we can help local reformers gain the upper hand in the struggle to define the future of the Middle East. In light of the Administration's colossally destructive pattern of failure, let us indeed debate national security—not to score political points but with the goal of finding a way out of the violence and hatred that threaten to engulf the region and with it American security for decades to come.

COMMENT

Fallout in Israel

Haifa

The day after the cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect, I paid a visit to Yana Knopova, coordinator of the Coalition of Women for Peace. Knopova lives in Haifa, where some of the rockets fired by Hezbollah during the fighting fell, and was among the tiny minority of Israelis who opposed the war from the start, arguing that it would achieve nothing save to make Israel more hated throughout the region and would cost many innocent lives. By the time we met, Israelis across the political spectrum were criticizing the war, the two soldiers whose kidnapping had sparked the conflict were still in Hezbollah's custody and columnists on the left and right were calling for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to step down. Knopova felt vindicated. "I feel in this war we have succeeded," she said. "The things we were saying at the beginning, now everybody is saying them."

But the sense of vindication may prove short-lived. Although it remains to be seen whether the cease-fire will last and what its long-term consequences will be, it looks increasingly as though the war's political beneficiaries in Israel will be on the right, among the people least willing to accept one of the central lessons it has underscored: that there are limits to military power. The bombing campaign that some in Washington evidently hoped would serve as a model for an eventual US attack on Iran, as Seymour Hersh recently reported in *The New Yorker*, instead brought to mind America's experience in Iraq, with Israeli troops suffering

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COMMENT

The Food Issue

Since we're a weekly magazine, "slow" is not a quality we often find ourselves working to achieve. But after embarking on the process of producing a special food issue under the guidance of Chez Panisse founder Alice Waters, we soon discovered that the "slow food values" she espouses are in harmony with our own. As she explains, "the pleasures of the table are a social as well as a private good," and as such they beget responsibilities—responsibilities that our fast-food system, as currently configured, simply cannot meet. Waters assembled a forum of leading figures in the world of food to consider how this system should be changed.

In keeping with the spirit of the forum, this issue, *The Nation*'s first (though we hope not last) on food, seeks not only to expose but to inspire. Thus, while there are articles investigating the grueling labor conditions on organic farms and in meatpacking plants, others explore how food justice activists are working to shift Harlem's food consciousness and change the nature of school lunch. Linking many of the pieces—on subjects ranging from Wal-Mart to world hunger—is the theme of access to good, healthy food: How can it be democratized? As several of these articles attest, a veritable movement is arising to address this issue, which has all the more currency with the recent mainstreaming of the organic food industry. (Another sign of food's political potency: the hundreds of passionate responses we received to our e-mail request for readers' testimonials about their most beloved food institutions. Selected highlights appear in this week's Letters section.)

Alice Waters, as well as Sylvan Brackett of Chez Panisse, provided essential editorial counsel for this issue. We would also like to thank Michael Pollan and Deirdre English for their help, as well as Anna Lappé, co-author of *Grub: Ideas for an Urban Organic Kitchen*, who served as a consulting editor.

unexpectedly heavy losses and getting bogged down in a quagmire that could have lasted months.

Yet in spite of this, many Israelis seem to continue to believe Hezbollah could have been defeated militarily. The problem was not the war itself, one hears people complain, but the way it was fought, in particular the fact that government officials dithered before deploying ground troops and didn't allow the Israel Defense Forces to hammer the enemy hard enough. The military mismanagement—Israeli troops lacking basic supplies like food and water, orders being altered in mid-operation—was indeed considerable. There is a widespread fear in Israel, not without reason, that the country's vaunted deterrent capacity has been irreparably harmed. But the idea that a full-scale ground assault would have made things different is a fantasy. Israel has, after all, tried such a thing before, when it invaded Lebanon in 1982. Then, too, the goal was to wipe out a hostile "state within a state" (the PLO). The result was eighteen years of military occupation and the emergence of a Shiite resistance movement (Hezbollah) backed by Iran that eventually kicked the intruders out.

A second reason the war's legacy may strengthen the hand of Israeli hard-liners rests in the cloud it has placed over the slogan long championed by the Israeli left: "land for peace." This is Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's gift to the Israeli right: to heighten the already widespread suspicion among Israelis that withdrawing from occupied territory (as Israel did in Lebanon six years ago) will only embolden the country's enemies, particularly the growing array of Islamist forces who do not recognize its right to exist. Fears on this score are not confined to Likud supporters. In Tel Aviv one morning, I had breakfast with a woman who has taken her sons to antiwar demonstrations and who favors an immediate end to the occupation. She told me she feels less and less certain that doing so will bring lasting peace, since a conflict that once seemed to be about land is increasingly being framed by the region's opposition movements in apocalyptic religious terms.

On the other hand, as she and others on the Israeli left point out, Israel did not withdraw from either Lebanon or Gaza with a peace treaty in hand. It did so unilaterally, under the misguided assumption that instead of talking to its enemies it can simply set the terms and conditions itself. Thus was Gaza evacuated (even as it remains under constant military siege), but in a manner that left Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas humiliated, since he played no role in the process. Thus was a disengagement plan drawn up for the West Bank—without any dialogue or input from the Palestinians.

What Israel has forgotten, Gideon Levy, a columnist for the daily *Ha'aretz*, told me, is that peace doesn't come from forcing your terms on others. It comes from negotiating agreements, not with people you trust and like (you don't need treaties with them) but with those you don't. Are there risks to such an approach? Of course: There's no guarantee that returning the Golan Heights to Syria or withdrawing from the West Bank will prevent Israel from facing future attacks. But what is the alternative? To prolong an occupation that lacks international legitimacy and makes it difficult even for moderate Arab regimes to carry on normal relations with Israel? To pretend the country's interests are served by refusing to talk to the leaders of other nations in the region? To be America's proxy in a "war on terror" that increasingly seems to fuel the hatred it is supposed to quell? To forget about peace and simply brace for the next round of war?

There are hints that some of Israel's leaders are mulling alternatives: Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has set up an exploratory committee to examine the possibility of resuming diplomatic dialogue with Syria, for example, which many analysts view as a potential way to isolate Iran and bring stability to both Lebanon and northern Israel (Syria is not only the transshipment nexus for Hezbollah's arms but clearly uses the group as a proxy to wrest back the Golan). Of course, Israel's chief ally and financial supporter, the United States, firmly opposes any such idea, dismissing

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Syria as part of the "axis of evil," a view that would no doubt be echoed by the future conservative coalition some right-wing commentators are talking excitedly about, to be led by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman. According to veteran *Ha'aretz* columnist Akiva Eldar, policy analysts are presenting the country's leaders with two scenarios: (1) accelerated peace talks with Syria, with the aim of exchanging the Golan and the Shebaa Farms for a comprehensive agreement with Damascus and Beirut; (2) a pre-emptive war with Syria, aimed at smashing the country before its military ties to Iran are further cemented. Neither the current Israeli government nor the most likely right-wing alternative seems capable of carrying out option one, and we all know which approach the hard-liners in Washington favor. Given this, Eldar grimly warns, "Keep the shelters [in the north] clean." They may soon be full of people again. EYAL PRESS

Eyal Press, a Nation *contributing writer, is the author of* Absolute Convictions *(Holt), a history of the abortion wars in Buffalo.*

Cedar Devolution

Beirut

The month of carnage that was Israel's failed attempt to destroy Hezbollah left Lebanon with a few bitter certainties. Its status as a holiday destination for the Persian Gulf's sybarites is on hold, with 1,100 people to bury, much infrastructure in ruins and oil spilled by Israeli bombing lapping at Beirut's shores. So too is Lebanon's role as a success story in US regional strategy, proclaimed in Washington after Syrian troops left last year but now rendered comic by Hezbollah's survival and immensely heightened popularity in the Middle East.

Less clear is the answer to a question asked by all Lebanese: What kind of country can this be? That question, in one form or another, is Lebanon's modern history writ crude, from the construction of the republic during France's mandate, with political privilege skewed toward its Maronite Christians, to the tug of war with a broader Arab identity that marked the road to the 1975–90 civil war. The question looms again now, leading many to wonder whether a politics based on tortuous sectarian consensus will collapse into renewed civil war should Hezbollah, flush with military victory, emerge as the country's dominant armed player.

"What happens now? Do you have to bring a gun to get in the door in Lebanon now?" wondered 39-year-old Tony Hayek, a shopkeeper in one of the capital's mainly Christian eastern neighborhoods. He feared that Hezbollah's survival with its arms intact might resurrect the sectarian militias of Lebanon's wartime bloodletting. "Everybody knows how to do that, and nobody needs encouragement. I don't want to believe things can go in that direction, but I don't have any guarantee that they won't." Those worries emerge from the fact that political divisions between Lebanon's Shiites, the country's largest group, and its other sects are more profound than at any time since the civil war, with the fate of Hezbollah's weapons the main point of contention.

The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in February 2005, in which a preliminary UN investigation implicated Syrian intelligence officials and their Lebanese allies, triggered huge street demonstrations that helped force Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon after nearly three decades of occupation. The date of the largest protest, March 14, gave a name to the coalition of Hariri allies who now lead Lebanon's government; broadly sympathetic to US and French ambitions to end Syria's sway in Lebanon, they have also sought a negotiated path to Hezbollah's disarmament. They sit uneasily next to Hezbollah, which is represented in the Cabinet with ministers, in the Parliament with deputies—and was represented in the streets with a massive pro-Syrian protest earlier that March.

Efforts to square those two political forces foundered, most recently in a months-long "National Dialogue," which was devoted in part to resolving the question of disarming Hezbollah, the only one of Lebanon's militias not to formally surrender its weapons after the civil war. The group's role in forcing Israel from Lebanon in 2000, and its remarkable performance against Israeli troops in this war, have settled that question for its partisans.

Ali Mohammad Alayan, 47, who fled the southern village of Qalaouay in the first days of the war to stay in a Beirut park with his family, laughed—gently, then bitterly—at the idea that Hezbollah ought to give way to the Lebanese army. He recalled the fate of a Lebanese internal security force whose barracks Israeli troops seized after occupying the southern town of Marjayoun on August 10. (The commander of the unit, which was evacuated in a refugee convoy subsequently bombed by Israeli forces, was detained briefly by Lebanese authorities after Israeli and Lebanese TV stations broadcast footage of him having tea with Israeli soldiers at the base.) "They had their weapons taken away by twenty Israeli soldiers, with nobody firing a shot while they're getting stripped down to their shorts. And these are the people who'll protect the south?" asked Alayan. "If the resistance wasn't backing them up, there's no way they could even talk about this." That dim view of the institutions intended to represent and serve the Lebanese, as Lebanese, is all that unites the many voices now asking what will become of the country.

In an address broadcast on Hezbollah's TV station the evening the cease-fire took effect, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah declared victory. Answering critics who accused him of dragging Lebanon into war on behalf of Hezbollah's Iranian and Syrian patrons, he called his triumph Lebanon's, linking its future to the group's arms. "We're an essential part of this country and we believe in the state. But what state?" asked Nasrallah, who in a previous address said he had opposed sending Lebanon's army to the south out of fear for its safety. He said he hoped for a state capable of defending Lebanon, so that "you no longer need to be in popular frameworks called the resistance."

ON THE WEB: Norman Birnbaum explores the strange silence of Günter Grass, Nicholas von Hoffman writes about Cuba's turn to sustainable agriculture and Joseph Huff-Hannon profiles librarians fighting to protect our rights to privacy and free expression (www.thenation.com).

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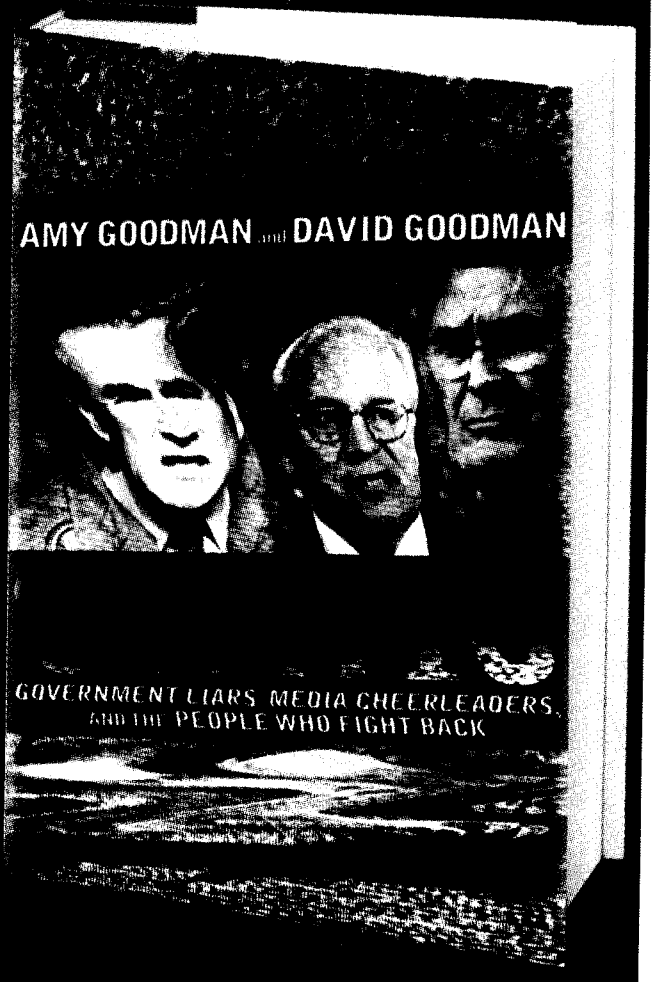

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HYPERION
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Amy Goodman is the host of *Democracy Now!*, which airs on over 500 public radio and television stations.

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COMMENT

Nasrallah's remarks seemed almost to anticipate the words of Druse leader Walid Jumblatt, who has said Lebanon cannot survive with an armed Hezbollah. Speaking three days after the cease-fire, Jumblatt said: "If Israel wants to attack Lebanon tomorrow, it'll attack the army—which will hold out for hours, or days, then be torn apart. And the resistance will remain." Invoking the threat of domestic strife, he asked, "But who will protect us internally?" Jumblatt's question pointed to the peril inherent in Lebanon's present balancing act: deploying an army never used to defend the country to fulfill a cease-fire resolution that leaves Israel latitude to attack Hezbollah, while postponing the question of the group's weapons, since all here acknowledge that any attempt to strip them by force would mean internecine bloodshed.

"We're not speaking of a Jacobin state robbed of its monopoly on violence," said Fawwaz Traboulsi, a historian at the Lebanese American University who helped lead Palestinian-allied militias during Israel's 1982 invasion. Citing that period, he added, "This is a state that has long ceded major functions to society."

A diplomatic compromise that effectively charges the state with disarming Hezbollah demands that Lebanon be immediately what it has never been at all. "Hezbollah is a mirror that shows the flaws of the Lebanese state," said Joseph Samaha, editor in chief of the *Al-Akhbar* daily. "As a secular leftist, I'm behind the resistance while wanting a real, active, credible state that meets its responsibilities. If that's there, I'm happy to say there's no justification for your existence as an armed group. Give me a proper state and I'll hand you the resistance." JOSEPH LOGAN

Joseph Logan, a freelance reporter and TV producer, covered Lebanon and Syria for Reuters in 2001–05, in addition to postings in Iraq and Turkey.

CALVIN TRILLIN

PRESIDENTIAL EATING PREFERENCES

Each President had favorite foods that we
Identify with him. We still can see
Dick Nixon following some global *crise*
While pouring ketchup on his cottage cheese.
Those grits were loved by Carter best of all—
For eating or for Spackle-ing a wall.
And Reagan, though his mind might wander far
In meetings, he could focus on that jar
Of jelly beans and know just where he was.
Bill Clinton, doing what a bad boy does,
Ignored what all the doctors had advised him
And ate Big Macs until they supersized him.
For LBJ so many 'cue pits burned,
It looked as if the British had returned.
Bush One? By eating pork rinds and not *crêpe*, he
Believed we wouldn't see him as a preppy.

So what does this Bush eat? We just don't know
We do know, though, what he won't eat is crow—
As if some allergy or something makes
Him sprout a rash if he admits mistakes.
"Just have a taste," say critics of the war.
"It's much like quail, which you and Dick adore.
One bite? This dish is yummy, and homemade.
Admit it was an error to invade."
He won't eat crow. No crow. No, not a bite.
He's never wrong, cause Jesus makes him right.
"Just taste," they say. "We've added some Tabasco.
Eat crow and put an end to this fiasco."
Bush says, "I'm hungry. I could eat a horse,
But not a crow. We have to stay the course."
"This course is crow," they say. "If you'll just try,
We'll get you for dessert some humble pie."

Dorothy Healey

The left's "greatest generation"—those tough-as-nails children of Ellis Island who built the CIO, fought Jim Crow in Manhattan and Alabama, and buried their friends in the Spanish earth—have now almost entirely passed from the American scene. It is an inestimable, heart-wrenching loss, and for many *Nation* readers, as well as listeners to Pacifica Radio, it is now symbolized by the death of Dorothy Ray Healey on August 6 in Maryland, at age 91.

The *Los Angeles Times* in its obituary predictably labeled Dorothy "the Red Queen," a term it had coined in the 1950s when it was trying to railroad her to prison. She was, unquestionably, Southern California's most famous Communist, but equally the CPUSA's most iconoclastic thinker and irrepressible rebel, bravely defending the Prague Spring and denouncing the Soviet Union for its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. One of the earliest memories of this daughter of immigrant Debsian Socialists was being bounced on Big Bill Haywood's knee. When she was 14 (in 1928) she joined the Young Communist League, and a few years later she quit high school to agitate the unemployed in downtown Oakland, trading prom night for a soapbox and jail cell.

This tiny woman's physical courage, like her warmth, intelligence and wit, was legendary: whether facing up to shotgun-toting vigilantes as a farmworkers' organizer in the late 1930s; defying her prosecutors as an indicted Communist leader in the 1950s; defending the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles in the 1960s; or telling Gus Hall where to shove it in the early 1970s, when she was finally expelled from the CPUSA for her democratic-socialist heresies. But neither the FBI nor the apparatchiks could take her off the air, and for decades more Dorothy used her soapbox on KPFK (Los Angeles) and then WPFW (Washington, DC) to argue eloquently for socialism, feminism and peace. MIKE DAVIS

Mike Davis's latest book is Planet of Slums *(Verso).*

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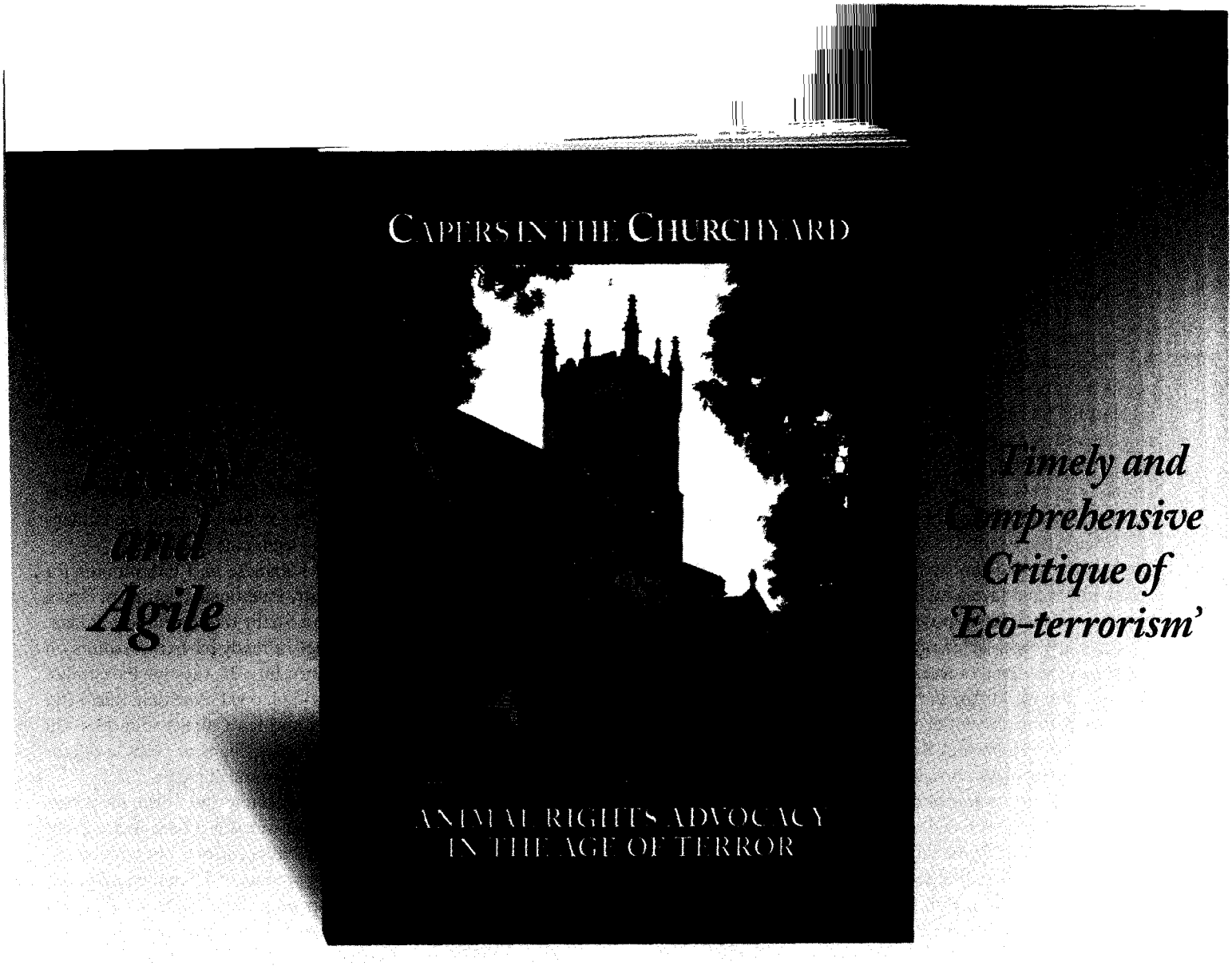

A tour of radical activism, with key insights for sorting progressive from reactionary tactics

Can our planet be saved through fear and violence? Activists who think so are zeroing in on enterprises coast to coast, country to country – with ever-burgeoning law enforcement units in hot pursuit.

Morris Dees, co-founder, Southern Poverty Law Center, calls *Capers in the Churchyard* "a beautifully written book that lays out an ethical animal rights activist's vision of a world without violence and offers a comprehensive critique of the 'eco-terrorism' of recent years."

The book's lively and agile analysis of the interplay between militancy and increased police power will appeal to anyone interested in the dynamic of ethical movements, especially those hoping to define the advocate's best role in addressing the urgent questions of our age.

By Lee Hall, with a Foreword by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. Published by Nectar Bat Press. $14.95. Available now from Friends of Animals www.friendsofanimals.org and internationally through Amazon.com.

TN

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Israel on the Slide: Who's to Blame?

In the aftermath of the onslaught on Lebanon you can open up the Israeli press, particularly the Hebrew editions, and find fierce assaults on the country's elites from left, right and center.

The overall panorama is one of chickens of all ages coming home to roost. Small pustules highlight larger rot. Chief of staff Dan Halutz, a narcissistic bully, secretly took time off the morning he ordered the terror bombing of south Beirut to tell Bank Leumi to sell his stock portfolio before the market plunged, which it soon did by nearly 10 percent.

The capacity of the US armed forces to fight intelligently and effectively has been almost destroyed by a system of graft-ridden procurement that favors expensive weapons systems validated by bogus tests. Israel's supposed military requirements have been a particularly ripe sector of that racket, and the consequences are plain to see. Israel's receipt of Patriot missiles was no doubt hugely profitable for the parties involved in the transaction, but in defensive function entirely useless. The Patriot missile batteries stationed near Haifa and Safed, much trumpeted by the Israel Defense Forces, played no significant role in the recent conflict.

Israel's generals paraded on TV in resplendent uniforms even as people in northern Israel too poor to flee found either no shelters at all (particularly Israeli Arabs) or, in the words of Reuven Pedatzur in *Ha'aretz*, "sat for more than one month in stinking shelters, some of them without food or minimal conditions."

Disfigured by its "special relationship" with the US arms industry, of which the US Congress is an integral component, the IDF has been morally corrupted by years of risk-free brutalization of unarmed Palestinians, many of them children. It's one thing to level an apartment building with a missile from a plane or crush a protester with a bulldozer or lob shells at a Palestinian family having a picnic on a beach or kidnap middle-aged and democratically elected Palestinian politicians. It's another to confront a foe, with modest but effectively deployed weaponry, prepared to fight back.

Years of racism have taken their toll too. Think of Arabs as subhuman "terrorists" and you end up making a lot of misjudgments, tactical and strategic.

Amid the first days of the "cease-fire" the Israeli press has been carrying reports not only about Halutz's secret stock sales but also that prime minister Ehud Olmert may have accepted a $500,000 bribe as part of a conspiracy with a building contractor, that justice minister Haim Ramon has resigned to battle charges of indecent assault on a female employee at a Defense Ministry party and that Israel's president, Moshe Katsav, may face charges of rape of a female employee.

On that first pre-cease-fire weekend, *USA Today* carried a story datelined Nabatiyeh by Rick Jervis headlined "Hezbollah workers rush to help victims rebuild": "Hezbollah deployed its army of social workers and engineers throughout this southern Lebanese city.... '[They] were here even before the bombing stopped,' said Mustafa Badreddine, 50, the mayor. 'They have offices here. They have municipal resources. And the people trust them.'"

As corrupted as the Israeli military that shoves them around, Israeli politicians have grown accustomed to thinking that any outrage on morality and reason will get a lusty cheer from the US political establishment, press and entertainment industry mostly included. They're right. They did get material encouragement from the Bush Administration, and lusty cheers from Capitol Hill and Hollywood while the press echoed all the nonsense about the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers being a legitimate *casus belli*.

Israel has been kidnapping Lebanese and Palestinians for years. There are now 10,000, mostly Palestinians, rotting in Israeli prisons. On June 25 Corp. Gilad Shalit was captured in Gaza, prompting an escalation in Israel's already barbaric assaults on the civilian population there. Since June 25, says the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees, Israel has kidnapped more than thirty-five Palestinian Parliament members and ten Cabinet ministers. On June 24 Israeli forces kidnapped two civilians in Gaza, a doctor and his brother, and sent them off to some dungeon.

You can read much commentary round the world, most particularly in Israel, saying this recent war was a benchmark event that could conceivably teach Israel its security is not won by unending land grabs and by terror-bombing of Lebanon and Gaza. But not in the United States. Open up the *Washington Post* and the strategic vision on display was an utterly mad piece co-written by one of the big boosters for war on Iraq, Kenneth Pollack. He's a hack thinker at the Brookings Institution, now an integral part of Israeli territory with its Saban Center for Middle East Policy, named for the fanatic Zionist news and entertainment billionaire Haim Saban, a man who handed the Democratic Party $12.3 million in 2002, a $7 million component of which was the single biggest contribution ever recorded up to that time. Silent about his role as war promoter (his forte was Saddam's imaginary nuclear arsenal), oblivious to the lessons of disaster in Iraq, reduplicated in the war in Lebanon, Pollack (with Georgetown University's Daniel Byman) called for a high, ongoing US troop presence in Iraq to help set up "refugee collection points"—i.e., concentration camps—on Iraq's borders and for tripwires—no doubt ultimately nuclear—to be established in expectation of war with Iran. You think Republican neocons are the only crazy ones?

Thirty years ago I used to be told that liberal American Jews were aghast at the rise of the *ur*-neocon fanatics like Norman Podhoretz, at *Commentary*, whose parent outfit was and is the American Jewish Committee. Soon, the liberals said to me off the record, there would be a counterattack by the forces of reason, as embodied in liberal American Jewry. There never was. The liberal Jewish intelligentsia here has, politically speaking, sat on its hands for decades, mouths zipped shut when it comes to criticizing Israel. Even more effectively than military contractors, they have contributed to, and indeed cheered on, Israel's corrupt rejectionism. Will this war make them change their minds? I doubt it. ■

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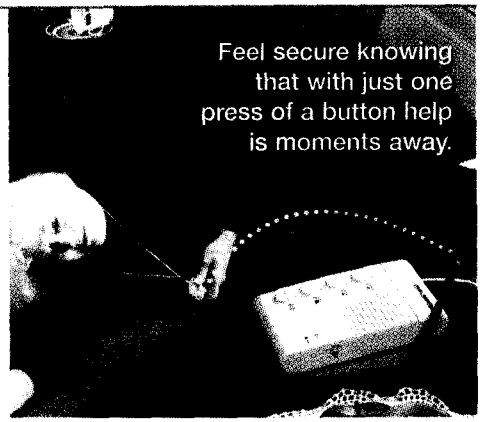

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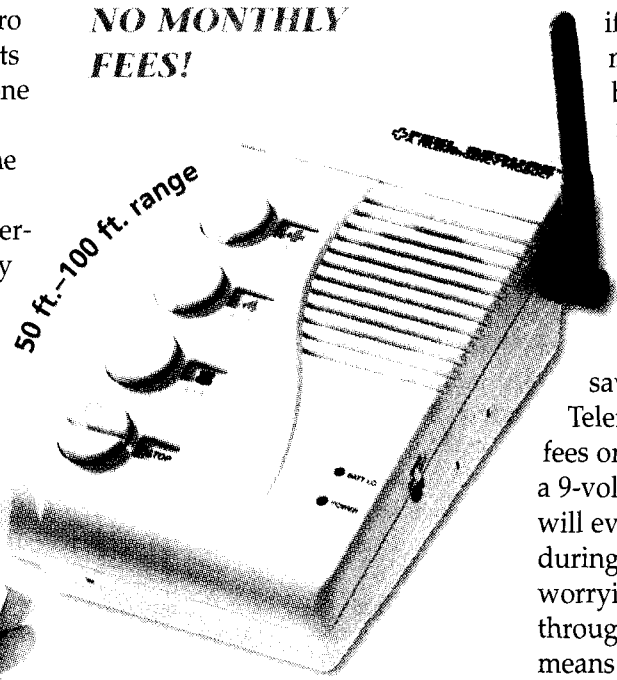

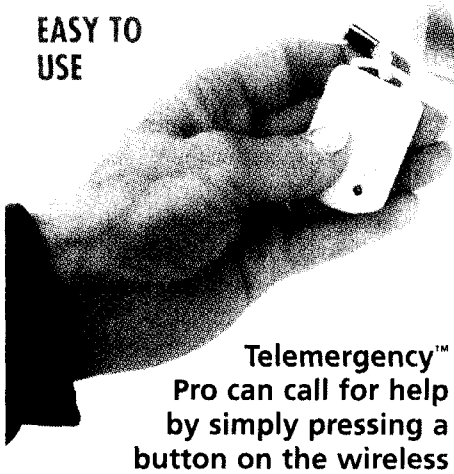

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KATHA POLLITT

Wrong War, Wrong Word

If you control the language, you control the debate. As the Bush Administration's Middle Eastern policy sinks ever deeper into bloody incoherence, the "war on terror" has been getting a quiet linguistic makeover. It's becoming the "war on Islamic fascism." The term has been around for a while—Nexis takes it back to 1990, when the writer and historian Malise Ruthven used "Islamo-fascism" in the London *Independent* to describe the authoritarian governments of the Muslim world; after 9/11 it was picked up by neocons and prowar pundits, including Stephen Schwartz in the *Spectator* and Christopher Hitchens in this magazine, to describe a broad swath of Muslim bad guys from Osama to the mullahs of Iran. But the term moved into the mainstream this August when Bush referred to the recently thwarted Britain-based suicide attack plot on airplanes as "a stark reminder that this nation is at war with Islamic fascists." Joe Lieberman compares Iraq to "the Spanish Civil War, which was the harbinger of what was to come." The move away from "war on terrorism" arrives not a moment too soon for language fussbudgets who had problems with the idea of making war on a tactic. To say nothing of those who wondered why, if terrorism was the problem, invading Iraq was the solution. (From the President's August 21 press conference: Q: "But what did Iraq have to do with September 11?" A: "Nothing." Now he tells us!)

What's wrong with "Islamo-fascism"? For starters, it's a terrible historical analogy. Italian Fascism, German Nazism and other European fascist movements of the 1920s and '30s were nationalist and secular, closely allied with international capital and aimed at creating powerful, up-to-date, all-encompassing states. Some of the trappings might have been anti-modernist—Mussolini looked back to ancient Rome, the Nazis were fascinated by Nordic mythology and other Wagnerian folderol—but the basic thrust was modern, bureaucratic and rational. You wouldn't find a fascist leader consulting the Bible to figure out how to organize the banking system or the penal code or the women's fashion industry. Even its anti-Semitism was "scientific": The problem was the Jews' genetic inferiority and otherness, which countless biologists, anthropologists and medical researchers were called upon to prove—not that the Jews killed Christ and refused to accept the true faith. Call me pedantic, but if only to remind us that the worst barbarities of the modern era were committed by the most modern people, I think it is worth preserving "fascism" as a term with specific historical content.

Second, and more important, "Islamo-fascism" conflates a wide variety of disparate states, movements and organizations as if, like the fascists, they all want similar things and are working together to achieve them. Neocons have called Saddam Hussein and the Baathists of Syria Islamo-fascists, but these relatively secular nationalist tyrants have nothing in common with shadowy, stateless, fundamentalist Al Qaeda—as even Bush now acknowledges—or with the Taliban, who want to return Afghanistan to the seventh century; and the Taliban aren't much like Iran, which is different from (and somewhat less repressive than) Saudi Arabia—whoops, our big ally in the Middle East! Who are the "Islamo-fascists" in Saudi Arabia—the current regime or its religious-fanatical opponents? It was under the actually existing US-supported government that female students were forced back into their burning school rather than be allowed to escape unveiled. Under that government people are lashed and beheaded, women can't vote or drive, non-Muslim worship is forbidden, a religious dress code is enforced by the state through violence and Wahhabism—the "Islamo-fascist" denomination—is exported around the globe.

"Islamo-fascism" looks like an analytic term, but really it's an emotional one, intended to get us to think less and fear more. It presents the bewildering politics of the Muslim world as a simple matter of Us versus Them, with war to the end the only answer, as with Hitler. If you doubt that every other British Muslim under the age of 30 is ready to blow himself up for Allah, or that shredding the Constitution is the way to protect ourselves from suicide bombers, if you think that Hamas might be less popular if Palestinians were less miserable, you get cast as Neville Chamberlain, while Bush plays FDR. "Islamo-fascism" rescues the neocons from harsh verdicts on the invasion of Iraq ("cakewalk...roses... sweetmeats...Chalabi") by reframing that ongoing debacle as a minor chapter in a much larger story of evil madmen who want to fly the green flag of Islam over the capitals of the West. Suddenly it's just a detail that Saddam wasn't connected with 9/11, had no WMDs, was not poised to attack the United States or Israel—he hated freedom, and that was enough. It doesn't matter, either, that Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites seem less interested in uniting the *umma* than in murdering one another. With luck we'll be scared we won't ask why anyone should listen to another word from people who were spectacularly wrong about the biggest politico-military initiative of the past thirty years, and their balding heads will continue to glow on our TV screens for many nights to come. On to Tehran!

It remains to be seen if "Islamo-fascism" will win back the socially liberal "security moms" who voted for Bush in 2004 but have recently been moving toward the Democrats. But the word is already getting a big reaction in the Muslim world. As I write the *New York Times* is carrying a full page "open letter" to Bush from the Al Kharafi Group, the mammoth Kuwaiti construction company, featuring photos of dead and wounded Lebanese civilians. "We think there is a misunderstanding in determining: "'Who deserves to be accused of being a fascist'!!!!"

"Islamo-fascism" enrages to no purpose the dwindling number of Muslims who don't already hate us. At the same time, it clouds with ideology a range of situations—Lebanon, Palestine, airplane and subway bombings, Afghanistan, Iraq—we need to see clearly and distinctly and deal with in a focused way. No wonder the people who brought us the disaster in Iraq are so fond of it. ■

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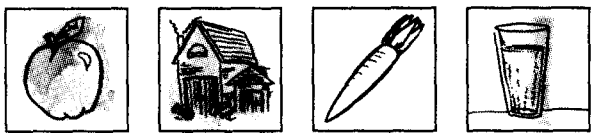
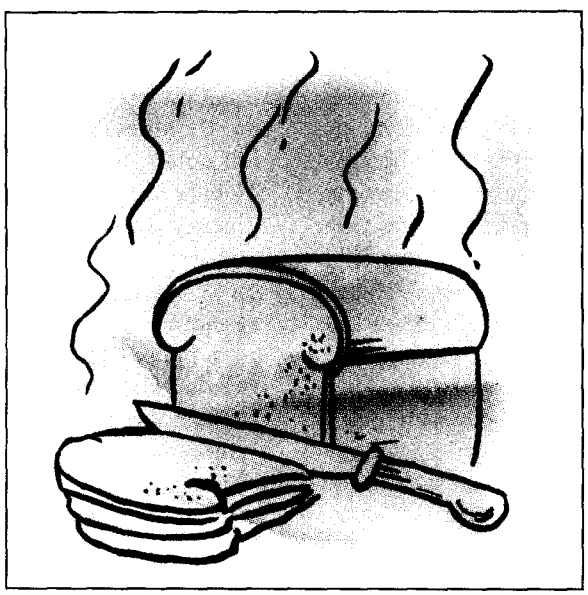
ARTICLES

Slow Food Nation

ALICE WATERS



It turns out that Jean Anthèlme Brillat-Savarin was right in 1825 when he wrote in his magnum opus, *The Physiology of Taste*, that "the destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they are fed." If you think this aphorism exaggerates the importance of food, consider that today almost 4 billion people worldwide depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihood. Food is destiny, all right; every decision we make about food has personal and global repercussions. By now it is generally conceded that the food we eat could actually be making us sick, but we still haven't acknowledged the full consequences—environmental, political, cultural, social and ethical—of our national diet.



These consequences include soil depletion, water and air pollution, the loss of family farms and rural communities, and even global warming. (Inconveniently, Al Gore's otherwise invaluable documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* has disappointingly little to say about how industrial food contributes to climate change.) When we pledge our dietary allegiance to a fast-food nation, there are also grave consequences to the health of our civil society and our national character. When we eat fast-food meals alone in our cars, we swallow the values and assumptions of the corporations that manufacture them. According to these values, eating is no more important than fueling up, and should be done quickly and anonymously. Since food will always be cheap, and resources abundant, it's OK to waste. Feedlot beef, french fries and Coke are actually good for you. It doesn't matter where food comes from, or how fresh it is, because standardized consistency is more important than diversified quality. Finally, hard work—work that requires concentration, application and honesty, such as cooking for your family—is seen as drudgery, of no commercial value and to be avoided at all costs. There are more important things to do.

It's no wonder our national attention span is so short: We get hammered with the message that everything in our lives should be fast, cheap and easy—especially food. So conditioned are we to believe that food should be almost free that even the rich, who pay a tinier fraction of their incomes for food than has ever been paid before in human history, grumble at the price of an organic peach—a peach grown for flavor and picked, perfectly ripe, by a local farmer who is taking care of the land and paying his workers a fair wage! And yet, as the writer and farmer David Mas Masumoto recently pointed out, pound for pound, peaches that good still cost less than Twinkies. When we claim that eating well is an elitist preoccupation, we create a smokescreen that obscures the fundamental role our food decisions have in shaping the world. The reason that eating well in this country costs more than eating poorly is that we have a set of agricultural policies that subsidize fast food and make fresh, wholesome foods, which receive no government support, seem expensive. Organic foods seem elitist only because industrial food is artificially cheap, with its real costs being charged to the public purse, the public health and the environment.

The contributors to this forum have been asked to name just one thing that could be done to fix the food system. What they propose are solutions that arise out of what I think of as "slow food values," which run counter to the assumptions of fast-food marketing. To me, these are the values of the family meal, which teaches us, among other things, that the pleasures of the table are a social as well as a private good. At the table we learn moderation, conversation, tolerance, generosity and conviviality; these are civic virtues. The pleasures of the table also beget responsibilities—to one another, to the animals we eat, to the land and to the people who work it. It follows that food that is healthy in every way will cost us more, in time and money, than we pay now. But when we have learned what the real costs of food are, and relearned the real rewards of eating, we will have laid a foundation for not just a healthier food system but a healthier twenty-first-century democracy.

Alice Waters is the founder of Chez Panisse Restaurant and director of the Chez Panisse Foundation in Berkeley, California.

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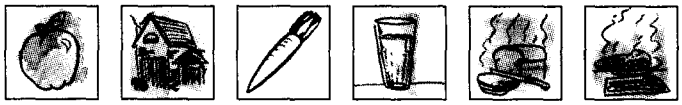
One Thing to Do About Food



A FORUM *edited by Alice Waters*

Eric Schlosser

Every year the fast-food chains, soda companies and processed-food manufacturers spend billions marketing their products. You see their ads all the time. They tend to feature a lot of attractive, happy, skinny people having fun. But you rarely see what's most important about the food: where it comes from, how it's made and what it contains. Tyson ads don't show chickens crammed together at the company's factory farms, and Oscar Mayer ads don't reveal what really goes into those wieners. There's a good reason for this. Once you learn how our modern industrial food system has transformed what most Americans eat, you become highly motivated to eat something else.

The National Uniformity for Food Act of 2005, passed by the House and now before the Senate, is a fine example of how food companies and their allies work hard to keep consumers in the dark. Backed by the American Beverage Association, the American Frozen Food Association, the Coca-Cola Company, ConAgra Foods, the National Restaurant Association, the International Food Additives Council, Kraft Foods, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the US Chamber of Commerce, among many others, the new law would prevent states from having food safety or labeling requirements stricter than those of the federal government. In the name of "uniformity," it would impose rules that are uniformly bad. State laws that keep lead out of children's candy and warn pregnant women about dangerous ingredients would be wiped off the books.

What single thing could change the US food system, practically overnight? Widespread public awareness—of how this system operates and whom it benefits, how it harms consumers, how it mistreats animals and pollutes the land, how it corrupts public officials and intimidates the press, and most of all, how its power ultimately depends on a series of cheerful and ingenious lies. The modern environmental movement began forty-four years ago when *Silent Spring* exposed the deceptions behind the idea of "better living through chemistry." A similar movement is now gaining momentum on behalf of sustainable agriculture and real food. We must not allow the fast-food industry, agribusiness and Congress to deceive us. "We urgently need an end to these false assurances, to the sugar-coating of unpalatable facts," Rachel Carson famously argued. "In the words of Jean Rostand, 'The obligation to endure gives us the right to know.'"

Eric Schlosser is the author of Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal *and, with Charles Wilson,* Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food *(both Houghton Mifflin). The movie version of* Fast Food Nation, *directed by Richard Linklater, will be released on November 17.*

Marion Nestle

From a public health perspective, obesity is the most serious nutrition problem among children as well as adults in the United States. The roots of this problem can be traced to farm policies and Wall Street. Farm subsidies, tariffs and trade agreements support a food supply that provides 3,900 calories per day per capita, roughly twice the average need, and 700 calories a day higher than in 1980, at the dawn of the obesity epidemic. In this overabundant food economy, companies must compete fiercely for sales, not least because of Wall Street's expectations for quarterly growth. These pressures induce companies to make highly profitable "junk" foods, market them directly to children and advertise such foods as appropriate for consumption at all times, in large amounts, by children of all ages. In this business environment, childhood obesity is just collateral damage.

Adults may be fair game for marketers, but children are not. Children cannot distinguish sales pitches from information unless taught to do so. Food companies spend at least $10 billion annually enticing children to desire food brands and to pester parents to buy them. The result: American children consume more than one-third of their daily calories from soft drinks, sweets, salty snacks and fast food. Worse, food marketing subverts parental authority by making children believe they are supposed to be eating such foods and they—not their parents—know what is best for them to eat.

Today's marketing methods extend beyond television to include Internet games, product placements, character licensing and word-of-mouth campaigns—stealth methods likely to be invisible to parents. When restrictions have been called for, the food industry has resisted, invoking parental responsibility and First Amendment rights, and proposing self-regulation instead. But because companies cannot be expected to act against corporate self-interest, government regulations are essential. Industry pressures killed attempts to regulate television advertising to children in the late 1970s, but obesity is a more serious problem now.

It is time to try again, this time to stop all forms of marketing foods to kids—both visible and stealth. Countries in Europe and elsewhere are taking such actions, and we could too. Controls on marketing may not be sufficient to prevent childhood obesity, but they would make it easier for parents to help children to eat more healthfully.

Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University, is the author of Food Politics *(California) and* What to Eat *(North Point).*

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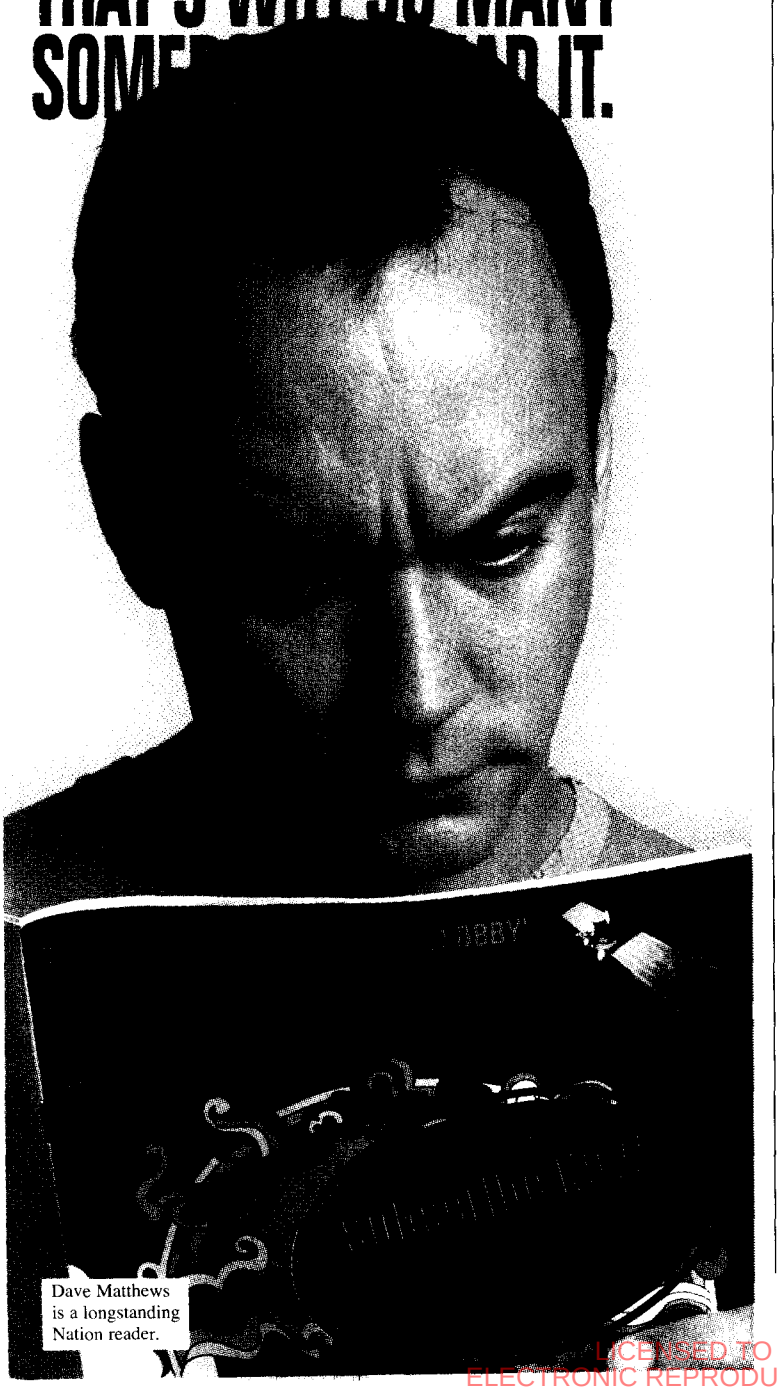

Dave Matthews is a longstanding Nation reader.

Michael Pollan

Every five years or so the President of the United States signs an obscure piece of legislation that determines what happens on a couple of hundred million acres of private land in America, what sort of food Americans eat (and how much it costs) and, as a result, the health of our population. In a nation consecrated to the idea of private property and free enterprise, you would not think any piece of legislation could have such far-reaching effects, especially one about which so few of us—even the most politically aware—know anything. But in fact the American food system is a game played according to a precise set of rules that are written by the federal government with virtually no input from anyone beyond a handful of farm-state legislators. Nothing could do more to reform America's food system—and by doing so improve the condition of America's environment and public health—than if the rest of us were suddenly to weigh in.

The farm bill determines what our kids eat for lunch in school every day. Right now, the school lunch program is designed not around the goal of children's health but to help dispose of surplus agricultural commodities, especially cheap feedlot beef and dairy products, both high in fat.

The farm bill writes the regulatory rules governing the production of meat in this country, determining whether the meat we eat comes from sprawling, brutal, polluting factory farms and the big four meatpackers (which control 80 percent of the market) or from local farms.

Most important, the farm bill determines what crops the government will support—and in turn what kinds of foods will be plentiful and cheap. Today that means, by and large, corn and soybeans. These two crops are the building blocks of the fast-food nation: A McDonald's meal (and most of the processed food in your supermarket) consists of clever arrangements of corn and soybeans—the corn providing the added sugars, the soy providing the added fat, and both providing the feed for the animals. These crop subsidies (which are designed to encourage overproduction rather than to help farmers by supporting prices) are the reason that the cheapest calories in an American supermarket are precisely the unhealthiest. An American shopping for food on a budget soon discovers that a dollar buys hundreds more calories in the snack food or soda aisle than it does in the produce section. Why? Because the farm bill supports the growing of corn but not the growing of fresh carrots. In the midst of a national epidemic of diabetes and obesity our government is, in effect, subsidizing the production of high-fructose corn syrup.

This absurdity would not persist if more voters realized that the farm bill is not a parochial piece of legislation concerning only the interests of farmers. Today, because so few of us realize we have a dog in this fight, our legislators feel free to leave deliberations over the farm bill to the farm states, very often trading away their votes on agricultural policy for votes on issues that matter more to their constituents. But what could matter more than the health of our children and the health of our land?

Perhaps the problem begins with the fact that this legislation is commonly called "the farm bill"—how many people these days even know a farmer or care about agriculture? Yet we

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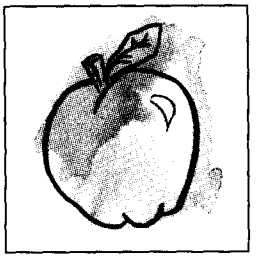
all eat. So perhaps that's where we should start, now that the debate over the 2007 farm bill is about to be joined. This time around let's call it "the food bill" and put our legislators on notice that this is about us and we're paying attention.

Michael Pollan, Knight Professor of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals *(Penguin).*

Wendell Berry

Alice Waters has asked me if I will propose one thing that could change the way Americans think about food. I will nominate two: hunger and knowledge.

Hunger causes people to think about food, as everybody knows. But in the present world this thinking is shallow. If you wish to solve the problem of hunger, and if you have money, you buy whatever food you like. For many years there has always been an abundance of food to buy and of money to buy it with, and so we have learned to take it for granted. Few of us have considered the possibility that someday we might go with money to buy food and find little or none to buy. And yet most of our food is now produced by industrial agriculture, which has proved to be immensely productive, but at the cost of destroying the means of production. It is enormously destructive of farmland, farm communities and farmers. It wastes soil, water, energy and life. It is highly centralized, genetically impoverished and dependent on cheap fossil fuels, on long-distance hauling and on consumers' ignorance. Its characteristic byproducts are erosion, pollution and financial despair. This is an agriculture with a short future.



Knowledge, a lot more knowledge in the minds of a lot more people, will be required to secure a long future for agriculture. Knowing how to grow food leads to food. Knowing how to grow food in the best ways leads to a dependable supply of food for a long time. At present our society and economy do not encourage or respect the best ways of food production. This is owing to the ignorance that is endemic to our society and economy. Most of our people, who have become notorious for the bulk of their food consumption, in fact know little about food and nothing about agriculture. Despite this ignorance, in which our politicians and intellectuals participate fully, some urban consumers are venturing into an authentic knowledge of food and food production, and they are demanding better food and, necessarily, better farming. When this demand grows large enough, our use of agricultural lands will change for the better. Under the best conditions, our land and farm population being so depleted, this change cannot come quickly. Whether or not it can come soon enough to avert hunger proportionate to our present ignorance, I do not know.

Wendell Berry, author of more than forty books of fiction, poetry and essays, has farmed a hillside in his native Henry County, Kentucky, for forty years. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the T.S. Eliot Award, the Aiken Taylor Award for poetry and the John Hay Award of the Orion Society.

Troy Duster and Elizabeth Ransom

Strong preferences for the kinds of food we eat are deeply rooted in the unexamined practices of the families, communities and cultural groups in which we grow up. From more than a half-century of social science research, we know that changing people's habitual behavior—from smoking to alcohol consumption, from drugs to junk food—is a mighty task. Individuals rarely listen to health messages and then change their ways.

If we as a nation are to alter our eating habits so that we make a notable dent in the coming health crisis around the pandemic of childhood obesity and Type II diabetes, it will be the result of long-term planning that will include going into the schools to change the way we learn about food. With less than 2 percent of the US population engaged with agriculture, a whole generation of people has lost valuable knowledge that comes from growing, preserving and preparing one's own food. A recent initiative by the City of Berkeley, California, represents a promising national model to fill this void. The city's Unified School District has approved a school lunch program that is far more than just a project to change what students eat at the noon hour. It is a daring attempt to change the institutional environment in which children learn about food at an early age, a comprehensive approach that has them planting and growing the food in a garden, learning biology through an engaged process, with some then cooking the food that they grow. If all goes well, they will learn about the complex relationship between nutrition and physiology so that it is an integrated experience—not a decontextualized, abstract, rote process.

But this is a major undertaking, and it will need close monitoring and fine-tuning. Rather than assuming that one size fits all in the school, we will need to find out what menu resonates with schools that are embedded within local cultures and climatic conditions—for example, teaching a health-mindful approach to Mexican, Chinese, Italian, Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Midwestern cuisine. Finally, we need to regulate the kinds of food sold in and around the school site—much as we now do with smoking, alcohol and drugs. The transition from agrarian to modern society has created unforeseen health challenges. Adopting an engaged learning approach through agricultural production and consumption will help future generations learn what it means to eat healthy food and live healthy lives.

Troy Duster, director of the Institute for the History of Production of Knowledge at New York University, holds an appointment as Chancellor's Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Elizabeth Ransom is a sociologist at the University of Richmond whose work focuses on globalization, food and the changing structure of agriculture.

Winona LaDuke

It's Manoominike Giizis, or the Wild Rice Making Moon, here on the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota. The sound of a canoe moving through the wild rice beds on the

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Crow Wing or Rice lakes, the sound of laughter, the smell of wood-parched wild rice and the sound of a traditional drum at the celebration for the wild rice harvest links a traditional Anishinaabeg or Ojibwe people to a thousand years of culture and the ecosystem of a lake in a new millennium. This cultural relationship to food—manoomin, or wild rice—represents an essential part of what we need to do to repair the food system: We need to recover relationship.

Wild rice is the only North American grain, and today the Ojibwe are in a pitched battle to keep it from getting genetically engineered and patented. A similar battle is under way in Hawaii between Native Hawaiians and the University of Hawaii, which recently agreed to tear up patents on taro, a food sacred to Native Hawaiians. At one point "agriculture" was about the culture of food. Losing that culture—in favor of an American cultural monocrop, joined with an agricultural monocrop—puts us in a perilous state, threatening sustainability and our relationship to the natural world.

In the Ojibwe struggle to "keep it wild," we have found ourselves in an international movement of Slow Food and food sovereignty activists and communities who are seeking the same—the recovery or sustaining of relationship as a basic element of our humanity and as a critical strategy. In the Wild Rice Making Moon of the North Country, we will continue our traditions, and we will look across our lakes to the rice farmers of the rest of the world, to the taro farmers of the Pacific and to other communities working to protect their seeds for future generations, and we will know that this is how we insure that those generations will have what they need to be human, to be Anishinaabeg.

Winona LaDuke directs the White Earth Land Recovery Project and works on issues of bio-piracy, indigenous rights and renewable energy. Her five books include, most recently, Recovering the Sacred *(South End), and she is a two-time Green Party vice-presidential candidate. She lives on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. Her parents met when her father was selling wild rice.*

Peter Singer

There is one very simple thing that everyone can do to fix the food system. Don't buy factory-farm products.

Once, the animals we raised went out and gathered things we could not or would not eat. Cows ate grass, chickens pecked at worms or seeds. Now the animals are brought together and we grow food for them. We use synthetic fertilizers and oil-powered tractors to grow corn or soybeans. Then we truck it to the animals so they can eat it.

When we feed grains and soybeans to animals, we lose most of their nutritional value. The animals use it to keep their bodies warm and to develop bones and other body parts that we cannot eat. Pig farms use six pounds of grain for every pound of boneless meat we get from them. For cattle in feedlots, the ratio is 13:1. Even for chickens, the least inefficient factory-farmed meat, the ratio is 3:1.

Most Americans think the best thing they could do to cut their personal contributions to global warming is to swap their family car for a fuel-efficient hybrid like the Toyota Prius. Gidon Eshel and Pamela Martin of the University of Chicago have calculated that typical meat-eating Americans would reduce their emissions even more if they switched to a vegan diet. Factory farming is not sustainable. It is also the biggest system of cruelty to animals ever devised. In the United States alone, every year nearly 10 billion animals live out their entire lives confined indoors. Hens are jammed into wire cages, five or six of them in a space that would be too small for even one hen to be able to spread her wings. Twenty thousand chickens are raised in a single shed, completely covering its floor. Pregnant sows are kept in crates too narrow for them to turn around, and too small for them to walk a few steps. Veal calves are similarly confined, and deliberately kept anemic.

This is not an ethically defensible system of food production. But in the United States—unlike in Europe—the political process seems powerless to constrain it. The best way to fight back is to stop buying its products. Going vegetarian is a good option, and going vegan, better still. But if you continue to eat animal products, at least boycott factory farms.

Peter Singer is a professor of bioethics at Princeton University. His most recent book, co-written with Jim Mason, is The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter *(Rodale).*

Vandana Shiva

Humanity has eaten more than 80,000 plant species through its evolution. More than 3,000 have been used consistently. However, we now rely on just eight crops to provide 75 percent of the world's food. With genetic engineering, production has narrowed to three crops: corn, soya, canola. Monocultures are destroying biodiversity, our health and the quality and diversity of food.

In 1998 India's indigenous edible oils made from mustard, coconut, sesame, linseed and groundnut processed in artisanal cold-press mills were banned, using "food safety" as an excuse. The restrictions on import of soya oil were simultaneously removed. Ten million farmers' livelihoods were threatened. One million oil mills in villages were closed. And millions of tons of artificially cheap GMO soya oil continue to be dumped on India. Women from the slums of Delhi came out in a movement to reject soya and bring back mustard oil. "Sarson bachao, soyabean bhagao" (save the mustard, drive away the soyabean) was the women's call from the streets of Delhi. We did succeed in bringing back mustard through our "sarson satyagraha" (noncooperation with the ban on mustard oil).

I was recently in the Amazon, where the same companies that dumped soya on India—Cargill and ADM—are destroying the Amazon to grow soya. Millions of acres of the Amazon rainforest—the lung, liver and heart of the global climate system—are being burned to grow soya for export. Cargill has built an illegal port at Santarém in Brazil and is driving the expansion of soya in the Amazon rainforest. Armed gangs take over the forest and use slaves to cultivate soya. When people like Sister Dorothy Stang oppose the destruction of the forests and the violence against people, they are assassinated.

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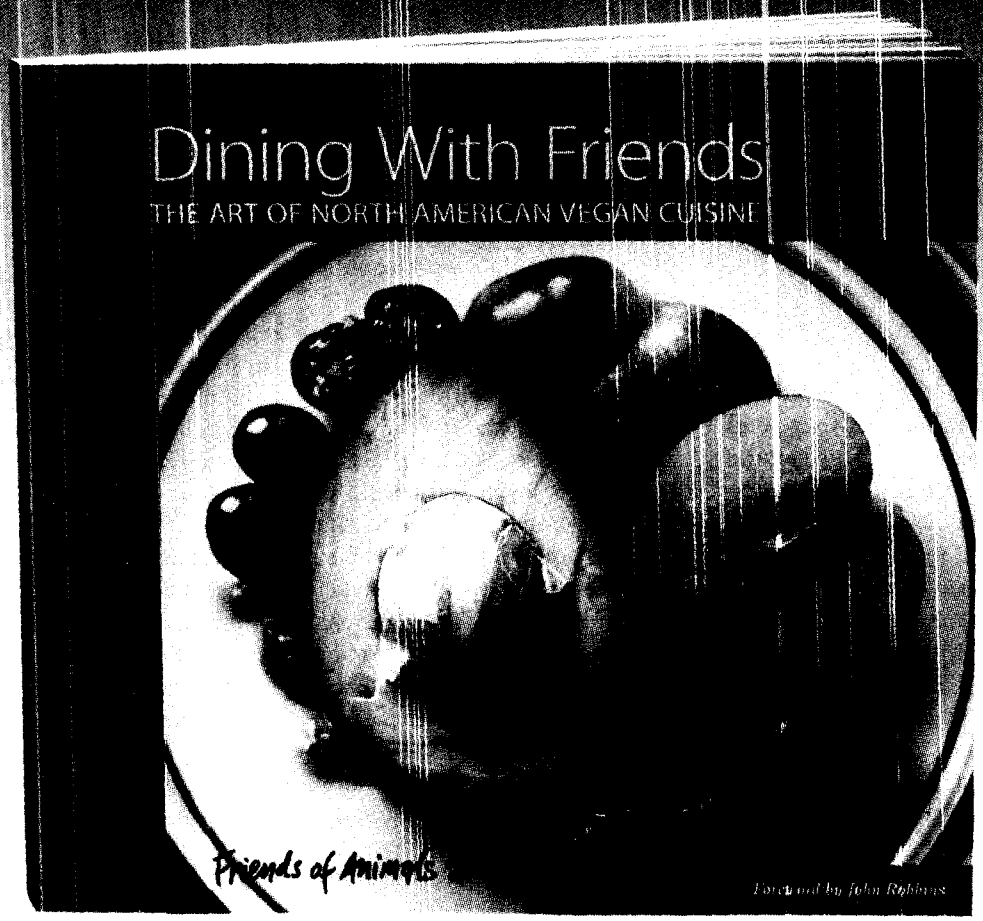

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People in Brazil and India are being threatened to promote a monoculture that benefits agribusiness. A billion people are without food because industrial monocultures robbed them of their livelihoods in agriculture and their food entitlements. Another 1.7 billion are suffering from obesity and food-related diseases. Monocultures lead to malnutrition—for those who are underfed as well as those who are overfed. In depending on monocultures, the food system is being made increasingly dependent on fossil fuels—for synthetic fertilizers, for running giant machinery and for long-distance transport, which adds "food miles."

Moving beyond monocultures has become an imperative for repairing the food system. Biodiverse small farms have higher productivity and generate higher incomes for farmers. And biodiverse diets provide more nutrition and better taste. Bringing back biodiversity to our farms goes hand in hand with bringing back small farmers on the land. Corporate control thrives on monocultures. Citizens' food freedom depends on biodiversity.

Dr. Vandana Shiva is a physicist, ecologist, activist, editor and author. She is the founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, a public interest research organization.

Carlo Petrini

By now it's practically a given that most people who produce food know nothing about gastronomy. In the past sixty years even the word "food" has been slowly emptied of its cultural meaning—of all the know-how and wisdom that should be naturally bound up with it. Industry and the production ethos have robbed people of the knowledge of food and reduced it to pure merchandise—a good to be consumed like any other.

So now gastronomy is seen as little more than folklore: diverting, yes (and nothing wrong with that), but vacuous, detached from our everyday lives. In fact, gastronomy is much more complex and profound. Gastronomy is a science, the science of "all that relates to man as a feeding animal," as Brillat-Savarin wrote in *The Physiology of Taste* (1825). It is a different kind of science, an interdisciplinary one that wants nothing to do with the ghettoization of knowledge or balkanization by specialty.

With its historical, anthropological, agricultural, economic, social and philosophical aspects, the science of gastronomy asks us to open our minds to the complexity of food systems, to think again about our own approach to our daily bread. It asks us to give food back its central role in our lives and the political agendas of those who govern. This also means returning to a respect for the earth, the source of all sustenance.

And it means a return to a sense of community that seems almost lost. We are always members of at least three communities at once: local, national and global. As global citizens, yes, we are destroying the planet—its equilibrium, its ecosystems and its biodiversity. As local citizens, though, we can make our own choices—choices that influence everyone's future. By producing, distributing, choosing and eating food of real quality we can save the world.

Gastronomic science tells us that the quality of food results from three fundamental and inseparable elements that I call the good, the clean and the just. This means paying attention to the taste and smell of food, because pleasure and happiness in food are a universal right (the good); making it sustainably, so that it does not consume more resources than it produces (the clean); and making it so that it creates no inequities and respects every person involved in its production (the just). By bringing food back to the center of our lives we commit ourselves to the future of the planet—and to our own happiness.

Carlo Petrini is the founder of the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Piedmont and Emilia Romagna, Italy. This article was translated from the Italian by Corby Kummer.

Eliot Coleman

Farmers may have strayed down a wrong path, but it isn't just agriculture's mistake. An addiction to treating the symptoms of problems rather than correcting their causes is an unwise choice made by our society as a whole. But the attitude that makes organic agriculture work could be the impetus for re-forming society.

The best organic farmers follow a pattern at odds with the pattern of chemical agriculture. As they become more proficient at working with the biology of the natural world, they purchase fewer and fewer inputs. Many purchase almost none at all. They use the natural fertility-improving resources of the farm by employing the benefits of deep-rooting legumes, green manures, crop and livestock rotations and so forth to correct the cause of soil fertility problems rather than attempting to treat the symptoms (poor yields, low quality) by purchasing chemical fertilizers. The same pattern applies to pest problems. By improving soil fertility, avoiding mineral imbalance, providing for adequate water drainage and air flow, growing suitable varieties and avoiding plant stress, organic farmers correct the causes of pest problems, thus preventing them, rather than treating the symptoms—insects and diseases—with toxic pesticides. Their aim is to cultivate ease and order rather than battle futilely against disease and disorder.

Like chemical agriculture, our economy is based on selling symptom treatments rather than trying to correct causes. For example, the medical profession peddles pills, potions and operations rather than stressing alternatives to destructive Twinkie nutrition, overstressed lifestyles and toxic pollution. Governments spend billions on armaments to prepare for wars or wage them (symptom treatment) instead of committing themselves to diplomacy and cooperation (cause correction). Although successful organic farmers demonstrate daily why correcting causes makes so much more sense than treating symptoms, this is not widely appreciated. If its implications were fully understood, organic farming would certainly be suppressed. Its success exposes the artificiality of our symptom-focused economy and shows why society's most intractable problems never seem to get solved.

Eliot Coleman, who has been a farmer for almost forty years, is the author of Four Season Harvest *and* The New Organic Grower *(both Chelsea Green).*

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Jim Hightower

In the very short span of about fifty years, we've allowed our politicians to do something remarkably stupid: turn America's food-policy decisions over to corporate lobbyists, lawyers and economists. These are people who could not run a watermelon stand if we gave them the melons and had the Highway Patrol flag down the customers for them—yet, they have taken charge of the decisions that direct everything from how and where food is grown to what our children eat in school.

As a result, America's food system (and much of the world's) has been industrialized, conglomeratized and globalized. This is food we're talking about, not widgets! Food, by its very nature, is meant to be agrarian, small-scale and local.

But the Powers That Be have turned the production of our edibles away from the high art of cooperating with nature into a high-cost system of always trying to overwhelm nature. They actually torture food—applying massive doses of pesticides, sex hormones, antibiotics, genetically manipulated organisms, artificial flavorings and color, chemical preservatives, ripening gas, irradiation...and so awfully much more. The attitude of agribusiness is that if brute force isn't working, you're probably just not using enough of it.

More fundamentally, these short-cut con artists have perverted the very concept of food. Rather than being both a process and product that nurtures us (in body and spirit) and nurtures our communities, food is approached by agribusiness as just another commodity that has no higher purpose than to fatten corporate profits.

There's our challenge. It's not a particular policy or agency that must be changed but the most basic attitude of policy-makers. And the only way we're going to get that done is for you and me to become the policy-makers, taking charge of every aspect of our food system—from farm to fork.

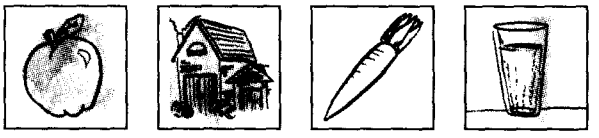
The good news is that this "good food" movement is already well under way and gaining strength every day. It receives little media coverage, but consumers in practically every city, town and neighborhood across America are reconnecting with local farmers and artisans to de-industrialize, de-conglomeratize, de-globalize—de-Wal-Martize—their food systems.

Of course, the Powers That Be sneer at these efforts, saying they can't succeed. But, as a friend of mine who is one of the successful pioneers in this burgeoning movement puts it: "Those who say it can't be done should not interrupt those who are doing it."

Look around wherever you are and you'll find local farmers, consumers, chefs, marketers, gardeners, environmentalists, workers, churches, co-ops, community organizers and just plain folks who are doing it. These are the Powers That Ought to Be—and I think they will be. Join them!

Jim Hightower (www.jimhightower.com) is a syndicated newspaper columnist, a radio commentator and the author of six books, including Thieves in High Places *(Plume).*

Hard Labor



FOR FARMWORKERS, IT'S NOT EASY BEING ORGANIC *by Felicia Mello*

The Grimmway packing plant in Arvin, California, a drab farmworker town fifteen miles southeast of Bakersfield, is where carrots go to be reborn. After months of being coaxed and weeded in the nearby fields, the vegetables are yanked from the ground by a mechanical harvester. A convoy of open-bed trucks carries them to the plant, a cluster of tan, windowless buildings with mysterious-looking pipes and gadgets protruding from the sides. Here they are washed, sliced, sanded and emerge as "baby" carrots—the snackable treats in the cellophane bag familiar to health-conscious shoppers everywhere.

Once the carrots pass through an opening in the side of the main building, they enter a world that seems miles away from the fields and orchards outside. Dozens of machines fill the chilly air with a deafening noise. Employees wade through pools of water several inches deep on the plant's rubber floor. There are carrots everywhere—scattered on the floor, piled inside carts and vats, in heaps at the base of the metal equipment.

At the grading tables, the new arrivals float by teams of Latinas in masks and hairnets who separate the good ones from those with imperfections. Supervisors stand by to time bathroom breaks of no more than seven minutes and to scold the women if they speak or glance up from their work.

Here, surrounded by the rhythmic thwack-thwacking of the machines, Beatriz Gonzalez stands for eight hours a day and sorts. Wearing rubber gloves and down ski pants to keep her warm, she deftly reaches into the orange tide, plucking out defective specimens and tossing them into a center tub. Years of performing the repetitive motion have swollen her forearms and left her with arthritis in her knuckles. When she started working in the Arvin plant, she earned the state minimum of $6.75 an hour. Four years later, she makes $7.30.

A petite woman with fluffy bangs and rounded features, Gonzalez studied law in her native Mexico but left school for the United States in search of wealth. "Now," she says sadly, "I have neither money nor education."

Gonzalez's workplace looks like any number of packing sheds in California's fruit and vegetable industry, where the

Felicia Mello is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Salon *and* The Los Angeles Times Magazine. *Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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state that grows half the country's produce has for decades relied on a low-paid immigrant workforce to tend and harvest its crops. But this is no ordinary plant—Gonzalez's employer is a leader in the organic food business, an industry that prides itself on a gentler approach to the land and the people who work it. Her experience illustrates just how far the organic food movement has yet to go to fulfill its promise of a more socially just food system.

I visited Grimmway because I was curious about organic food and the people who grow it. I grew up eating vegetables from my mother's garden. Fresh-picked zucchini blossoms fried and stuffed with cheese, homemade bread soaked in the juice of heirloom tomatoes—these are some of my most vivid childhood memories. And when I go grocery shopping, I'm drawn to fruits and vegetables that look like the ones on which I was raised: real and imperfect, sometimes a little dirty, but looking and smelling like fruits and vegetables rather than waxy widgets that just fell off an assembly line. In other words, I buy organic, and I feel good about the decision, even if it means spending a little more.

Organic fieldwork is especially strenuous because farmers employ back-breaking methods like hand-weeding to avoid pesticides.

I'm not alone. For many consumers, an organic apple tastes sweeter not only because it's healthier but because it conjures up a vision of a simpler, more pure world, where we produce our food without wreaking havoc on the environment and our relationship to it is unmediated by fear, guilt or the drive for excessive profits. This image of a food utopia has fueled the growth of the organic food industry, which is expanding by 20 percent each year.

But the farmworkers who bring in the organic harvest face a different reality, one largely invisible to food buyers. Whether they work in the fields or in processing plants, most workers on organic farms, like those on conventional farms, are immigrants from Mexico who earn minimum wage or slightly more and receive no benefits. Fieldwork on organic farms can be especially strenuous because farmers employ back-breaking methods like hand-weeding to avoid using pesticides.

California's more than 2,000 organic farms range from multimillion-dollar companies like Grimmway, where temporary agencies and labor contractors supervise the workers, to small family ranches where owners enjoy good relations with employees but pay them so little that they rely on public assistance and charity. Organic farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley, the state's largest agricultural region, often live in the same towns as conventional farmworkers, where poverty rates can reach one-third, pesticide drift is an ever-present problem and the food available for purchase is likely to be high in fat and low in nutrients. A 1999 study of 150 California organic farmers found that more than half paid their workers the minimum wage; less than 10 percent paid more than $7.50 per hour.

"Generally a consumer who goes to Whole Foods makes the assumption that if producers are growing in a way that's conscious of the environment, that's going to be better for workers," said Martha Guzmán, legislative advocate for the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, a farmworker advocacy group. "And that assumption benefits the organic industry. But when you look at the labor practices that matter most—paying decent wages, treating workers with respect—none of that is really related to whether you use a certain type of pesticide."

It wasn't supposed to be this way. The homesteaders and commune dwellers who pioneered sustainable agriculture in the 1960s saw their movement as a wholesale alternative to industrial agriculture, with its poisonous chemicals, soil-depleting techniques and exploitative labor practices. As culinary historian Warren Belasco explains in his book *Appetite for Change*, early farmers' "radical vision extended the organic farmer's cooperation with nature to a cooperative model in human relations."

Yet after spending several months visiting California organic farms and talking to consumers, workers, farmers and retailers, I heard a sharp debate about whether organic farmers should do better for their employees. The clamor has intensified in the past year, as farmers and worker advocates have clashed over state regulations intended to protect farmworkers. In the spring of last year, researchers at the University of California published a study showing that organic farmers widely oppose requirements that they pay benefits and allow farmhands to organize.

Nonetheless, there is a small but growing campaign, backed by some of organic agriculture's staunchest supporters, for a new kind of food labeling, one that would guarantee that food is produced in ways that benefit workers as well as the environment.

As organic farming comes of age, with demand outpacing supply, many are asking the same questions I did after my tour of Grimmway: How did organic farmers come to emulate the labor practices of a system they fought so hard to escape? And when it comes to the way Americans treat the people who grow our food, is this as good as it gets?

"Farming is farming," says Fred Rappleye, a manager for Grimmway's organic division, when I tell him some criticize the company's low wages. "When you get into organic you are being more proactive with the environment, but [boosting] pay is a hard thing to do. Labor is always the highest cost, and it's one of the things we try to keep under control. All of organic is a business, too, and you have to make money."

And Grimmway does make money—$450 million in 2005, according to analysts. The firm sells more than 40 percent of the world's carrots, more than any other grower. Advocates for workers say the company skimps on labor costs using the time-honored practice of contracting out.

"The motivation for hiring contractors is to avoid direct responsibility for wages and benefits," says United Farm Workers (UFW) spokesperson Marc Grossman. "You have no job rights—when the harvest begins you have to come with your hat in your hand and beg for your job, even if you've worked for the same grower for twenty years."

Grimmway and contractor Esparza Enterprises currently face a lawsuit claiming contract workers were sexually harassed

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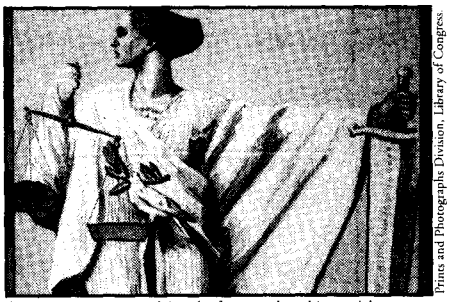

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About Your Professor

Dr. Patrick Grim is a Distinguished Teaching Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. While a Fulbright Fellow at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, he earned his B.Phil. He received his Ph.D. from Boston University. He is the author of *The Incomplete Universe: Totality, Knowledge, and Truth* and the founding coeditor of more than 20 volumes of *The Philosopher's Annual.* He has been awarded the President and Chancellor's awards for excellence in teaching and has been elected to the Academy of Teachers and Scholars.

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while working at the company. The state Department of Labor has also fined Esparza for failing to train employees to use dangerous equipment and for hiring children without work permits. The checkered record is typical of farm labor contractors. And indeed, nothing about Grimmway's business practices suggests that its workers fare worse than those on other large farms. The company's owners, conventional farmers with little connection to the organic movement, have simply chosen agribusiness-as-usual over the movement's social justice principles.

On a foggy day Rappleye, a tall twentysomething with startlingly clear blue eyes, drove me around the dirt roads of Arvin. Around us the company's fields seemed to stretch forever, some barren, others covered with fernlike carrot tops or a bright mix of collards and chards.

When Grimmway began farming organically in the mid-1990s, Rappleye explained, it found the new venture to be far more labor-intensive than conventional agriculture. In a conventional field, one worker can spray weeds with pesticides at a cost of $30 per acre, he said. Organic farming requires crews of laborers for weeding that can cost up to $1,000 per acre.

The physically demanding nature of organic farming sparked a recent battle that pitted organic farmers against farmworkers.

The physically demanding nature of organic farming sparked a recent battle that pitted organic farmers against farmworkers. The UFW had long drawn attention to musculoskeletal problems suffered by people who work stooped over in the fields. In the 1970s the union led a successful campaign to ban the short-handled hoe, arguing that the tool caused back injuries. When union founder Cesar Chavez died, friends at the funeral placed one of the hoes on his casket. But growers soon found a way around the ban by requiring workers to weed by hand. Moisés Olivera, a migrant worker who's hopped from job to job throughout the Central Valley, explained to me how it feels.

"You go along on your knees," he said. "There is a constant, numbing pain. By the end of a year people develop a lot of problems with their bones."

In 2004 farmworker groups lobbied the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration to restrict hand-weeding. Organic farmers led the backlash against the proposal. While they have devised many creative tactics for banishing weeds without pesticides—singeing them with torches, slicing them with disks, allowing them to flourish before planting and then mowing them down—every organic farmer I talked to insisted there's only one way to completely rid your crop of the pesky plants: sitting, kneeling or bending, plucking them out one by one.

It's tremendously costly. Yet farmers say there's little alternative; long-handled hoes, which would allow workers to stand upright, can destroy some of the delicate specialty crops, such as baby leaf lettuce, that many organic farmers cultivate. At a minimum they would force farmers to space their plants farther apart, cutting into profits by yielding a smaller harvest on the same area of land.

"You're talking about growing five times as many acres," said Rappleye. "Your costs go outta sight. There's not enough ground or enough manure in the valley to farm that way."

The farmers ultimately triumphed, and OSHA exempted organic farms from the new rules, which went into effect last year. For labor advocates like Martha Guzmán, who had sought to reach a compromise, it was a slap in the face. "I realized then that I could get my organization to support a conservation act or greater subsidies for transitional assistance [to organic farmers]," she said. "But none of that was being really reciprocated. It's just not part of their vision."

Of course, workers benefit most obviously from organic farming by not being exposed to pesticides. But Don Villarejo, an agricultural policy analyst who conducted the largest-ever clinical study of farmworker health in California, argues that while pesticide exposure is important, it's not the most crucial health issue on the farm. Villarejo pointed to data on reported workers' compensation claims between 1990 and 1999. Of the major claims, where insurance companies paid $5,000 or more, only 1.5 percent stemmed directly or indirectly from pesticides. Almost half were strain injuries, followed by fractures, sprains and lacerations.

"Yes, pesticides are a concern, and it's good farmers are trying to figure out how to grow without them," he said. "But if you really want to deal with the fact that workers are being killed and maimed all the time, you have to look elsewhere."

After three straight weeks of rainy weather on Riverdog Farm, owner Tim Mueller is looking harried. Dressed like a stereotypical hippie farmer with a ponytail, 1970s-style glasses, shorts and galoshes, he dashes back and forth from the packing shed to the cramped trailer that serves as the farm's office, fixing computer problems, helping an employee translate documents into Spanish and checking in on crates of vegetables that packers are readying for shipment.

This spring's heavy storms have destroyed thousands of dollars in crops here in the Capay Valley, a narrow slice of land near Sacramento where small farmers like Mueller grow specialty produce for chic restaurants. Mueller estimates that he has lost 10 percent of the gross income from his 250-acre ranch, half of which goes to labor costs. The tour he takes me on is a trail of horrors: the peas that were sickened by the rain, the broccoli field with a flood at one end, the stacks of seedling trays by the greenhouse, waiting to be planted.

When Mueller looks at this wreckage, he sees numbers. More specifically, he sees his workers' paychecks. "I'm looking at their year-to-date earnings and I'm going, Not only are we behind on earnings, but all of them are behind," he says. "That's what these greenhouses full of plants symbolize."

Smaller farms like Riverdog make up the majority of organic farms in California. But their share of the profits and acreage is shrinking as organic giants like Grimmway and Salinas Valley–based Earthbound Farms increasingly dominate the market. Most survive through some combination of farmers' markets, wholesale and restaurant sales, and home deliveries. It's not an easy living. In a bad year Mueller might gross 2 percent less than his expenses. A fantastic year means 4 percent profit.

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So how are Riverdog's workers faring in that eco-economy? I meet several of them in a soggy field where they are cleaning leeks, sitting on overturned crates, their legs ankle-deep in mud. They get along well with Mueller, they say, and like their job—except in months like this, when the least senior employees go days without pay because there is nothing for them to do. Most earn California's minimum wage of $6.75 per hour, and some have worked fewer than twenty hours in the past week.

"We're all waiting for summer, when the tomatoes are ripe; we work ten hours a day and we can send a little to Mexico to save or to build a house," says Consuelo Romo, a crew leader with a toothy grin and a tan bandanna wrapped around her head. "But in the winter, we don't have enough even to cover our own expenses."

Romo is a single mother with two kids and one of a minority of workers whose salaries top the minimum. She makes $8.50 per hour, just below the poverty line for a family of three. She gets canned food and used clothing from local nonprofits, and struggles to pay $20 a day for childcare at an unlicensed center. I ask Romo if she ever buys organic food for her children. Usually when I've asked farmworkers this question, they've laughed at the idea of such luxury. Romo looks embarrassed. "It's an economic question," she says. "I buy food grown with chemicals so I can save to buy something else."

Like Romo, most organic farmworkers can't afford to eat the food they produce, says Gail Feenstra, food systems coordinator for the Sustainable Agriculture Program at the University of California, Davis. "They're in a community where they don't even have access to it," she told me. "What they do have access to is very processed food that is helping to create diseases like diabetes, and government food programs that give out lard and canned products high in sodium and fat."

In 2004 Feenstra and her colleagues surveyed close to 200 mostly small organic farmers on their labor practices; two-thirds supplied no benefits. Mueller has put together a health plan for workers but says it's a trade-off, leaving less money for wages. There are some success stories, like one man who got a free hernia operation he'd been putting off for years. But most Riverdog workers don't meet the plan's eligibility requirements of six straight months of full-time work.

As we sit in Mueller's truck, with the rain pattering on the roof, he tells me how he and his wife, Trini, started Riverdog fifteen years ago, with just five acres. "For most of us who got involved with organic farming then, it was about a social movement," he says. "It was about land reform, labor reform, bringing small farms back. That's all gone. It's been legislated away, economized away. There is no dollar for that. I think most small organic farmers know their workers and want to do right by them but have varying levels of feeling like they can afford to do it."

Mueller plants less lucrative crops like alfalfa in the winter so he can provide year-round employment, and is known to kick in a few hundred dollars as a no-interest loan to help a worker buy a car or a piece of furniture. Still, he rails against labor regulations that he sees as costly and inefficient, like a 2005 law requiring farmers to stop work in very high temperatures, passed after several farmworkers died from heat exhaustion.

"Farming is about common sense, which you can't really leg-

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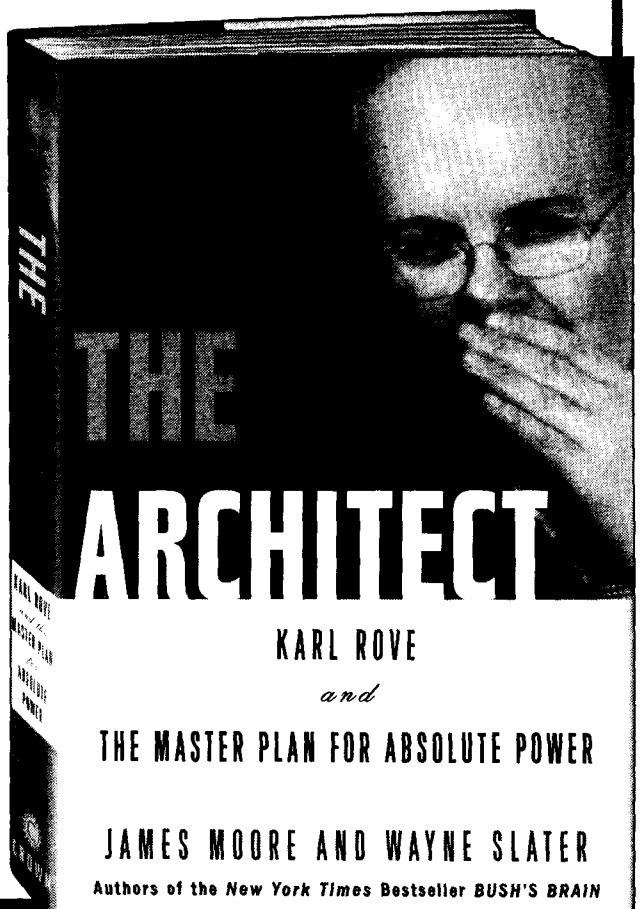

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islate," he says. "When people fuss about us watching the little numbers, we say, Look, we have to do that just to make sure we don't go under."

His comments capture the sentiments of many small organic farmers, who feel their financial situation leaves little room for idealism when it comes to working conditions. Farmers in the University of California study said they agreed in theory that labor standards were important but disagreed with adding them to the requirements for organic certification. Close to half said organic farmers should not have to allow farmworkers to organize—a right guaranteed under California law.

Small farmers' objections have derailed earlier attempts to set labor standards for organic farms. In 1990 Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act, directing the Agriculture Department to establish a board of growers, consumers and retailers charged with developing the first national rules for the organic industry. Third-generation farmer Michael Sligh, founding chair of the board, brought a labor organizer to address one meeting. According to Fred Kirschenmann, a North Dakota grain farmer who served on the board, the group batted around some ideas and came close to agreeing that organic farmers should be required to provide employee health benefits.

"Then one of the farmers from California raised his hand and said, 'I really agree that we should do this, but my problem is I can't even provide health insurance for my family.' It became such a complex issue that nobody really knew how to deal with it, so it fell by the wayside."

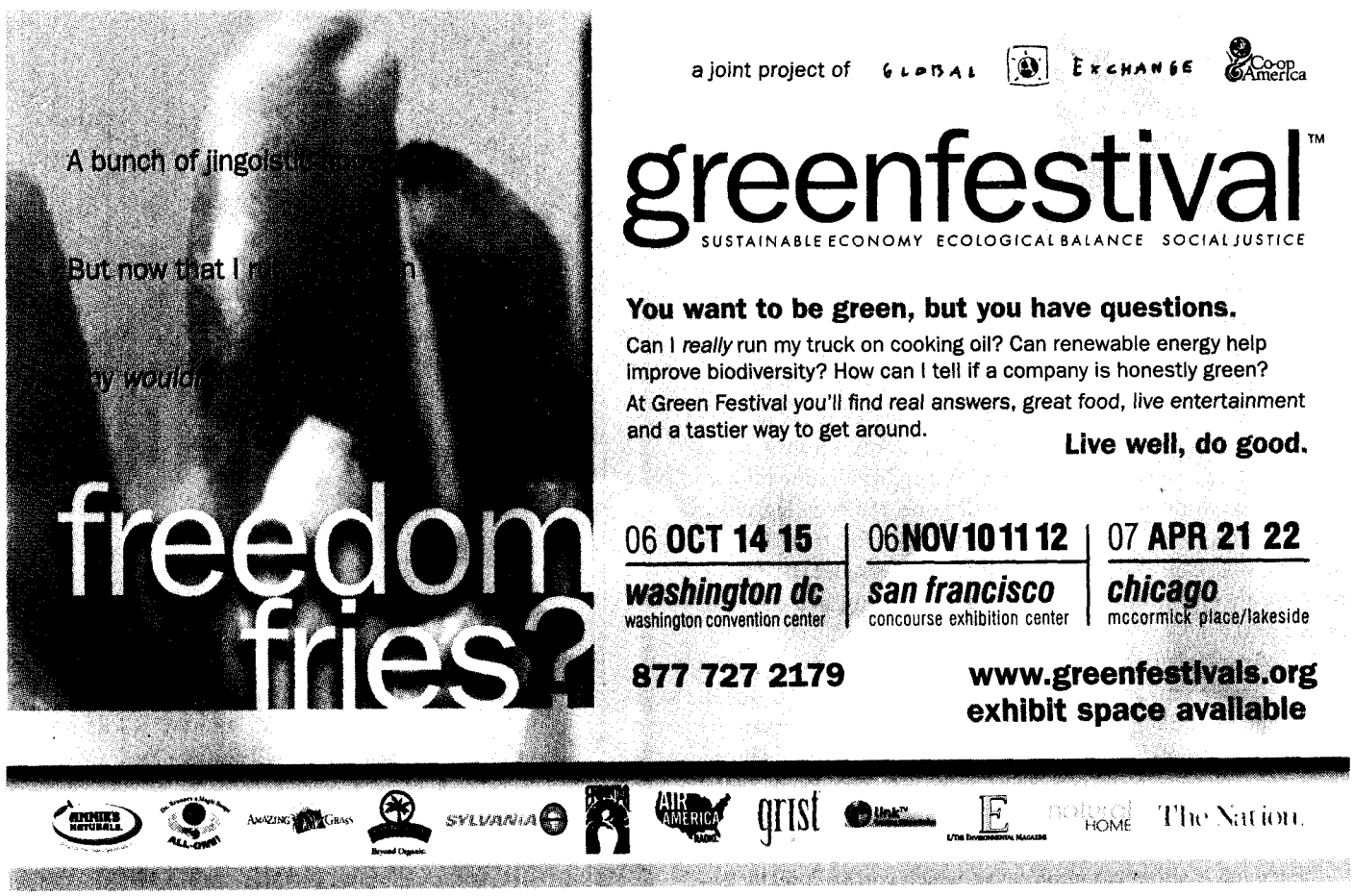
There's little hint of these dilemmas in the shelf displays at Whole Foods Market in Berkeley, California. Posters hanging over the produce bins feature smiling white farmers posed against backdrops of lush fields, the sun glistening on their hair. More signs plastered to the bins helpfully spell out everything from the nutritional content of a coconut to the pros and cons of produce wax. None address working conditions.

A gaggle of shoppers fill the aisles, peering at lists and hefting and prodding vegetables. Public school teacher Carmen Carreras is picking out artichokes for dinner. They were grown conventionally, but she almost always buys organic. "I buy it because it's better for everybody," she tells me immediately. "Better for the environment, better for me and better for the workers."

Carreras says workers on organic farms must work hard, "but I imagine they don't get as many illnesses related to their work. I guess it's easier for them, and I hope they feel more connected to nature because all the processes are natural."

Carreras's comments are typical of what market researchers call the "hard core"—those customers who buy mostly organic, shop at farmers' markets and are more likely to rank social justice issues as a high priority. While they may know little about actual working conditions on organic farms, they believe that their purchases are helping to create a more egalitarian food system. For them the word "organic" evokes not simply a growing method but a political and lifestyle choice.

But not everyone thinks like Carreras, according to Laurie Demeritt, president of the Hartman Group, a market research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firm specializing in the natural food industry. The mainstreaming of organic is creating a new kind of organic consumer, says Demeritt, one who's more concerned about the immediate health of her family than anything else. These shoppers tend to understand organic in terms of the narrow, technical definition put forward by the National Organic Standards Board: a growing method that does not involve the use of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.

"Today's organic consumer looks like the average US consumer," says Demeritt. "They haven't put a lot of thought into what they're consuming until they have a child. Then they think, 'I want my child to be healthy, so I'm going to buy them organic milk.'"

Such consumers rank concerns about workers very low on their list, if at all. It's not that they're anti-worker, says Demeritt. They're just not as invested in their buying decisions as the hard-core group. "They don't really have a lot of information and they don't really want it—as long as they can think they're making a better choice, that's enough."

Consumers, of course, also care about price, and organic food's relatively high cost turns off many potential buyers. If higher wages equal higher prices, as any Wal-Mart spokesperson will tell you, wouldn't bettering working conditions on farms cement organic products' status as luxury items? Is agriculture a zero-sum game, where we must choose between access to affordable healthy food and decent living standards for the people who grow it?

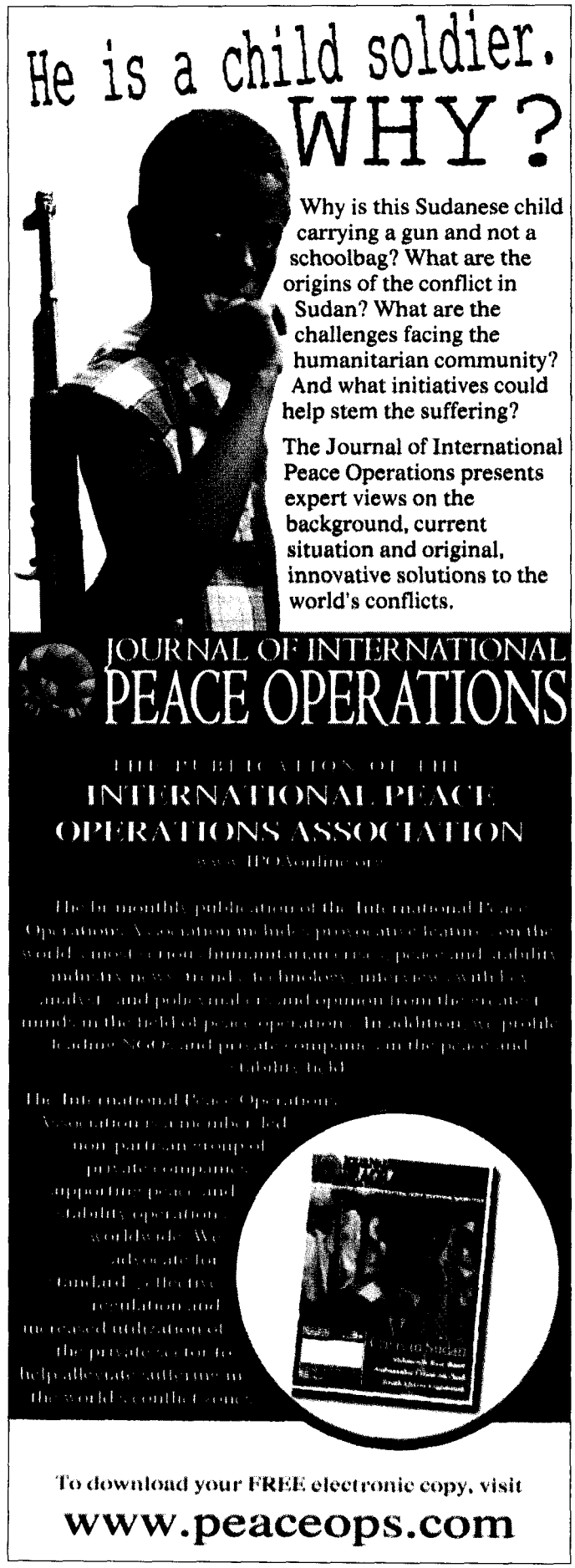
Feenstra, the UC Davis researcher, doesn't think so. "I think it's a false choice," she says. "Most of the money in the food system, about 80 percent, is in the marketing, processing and distribution sector, compared with 20 percent for production. Organic food is not just fruits and vegetables; a lot of it is processed, and that shoots the price up. So when you're talking about labor costs, they're probably going to add 1 or 2 cents, compared with what you're paying for excess packaging, transport from here to there, all those layers of cellophane and bright-colored boxes."

Feenstra envisions a decentralized food network with people buying minimally processed food through direct markets, and schools and hospitals serving up organic meals made with ingredients from local farms.

"It's not just on the backs of organic growers to fix this thing," she continues. "It's going to take a long, slow shift to get us from a system that's hierarchical, with a few people controlling the resources, to one that's more disaggregated."

Strawberry farmer Jim Cochran seems to agree. The owner of Swanton Berry Farm was the first and only California organic farmer to negotiate a union contract with his workers, after hearing UFW president Arturo Rodriguez speak at a conference in 1998. Swanton's employees form a labor aristocracy of sorts, with wages of $8 to $12 an hour, medical and dental care, pensions and paid vacations. During the workday, ranchera music wafts over Swanton's fields, which lie on the coast near Santa Cruz and have a sweeping view of the Pacific. The men talk and joke as they move down the rows, which are elevated to ease the strain of weeding and picking.

Cochran balances his budget by following a strict philosophy: He plants an older variety of berries that customers prize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for its full-bodied taste. He processes, packs and distributes the berries himself, and avoids extra debt by leasing his land from a nonprofit land trust. The brand draws a loyal following in farmers' markets and natural food stores, bringing in enough money to pay his hefty labor costs.

"Farmers need to see that it can be done," says Cochran. "They're afraid because they look at their returns and they think it's impossible. But we need to go from saying 'I'm doing the best I can' to realizing we should do more."

Across the country, small bands of eco-crusaders are developing ways to reward organic farmers who make commitments to their workers. The Organic Consumers Association, a grassroots group that organizes buyers over the Internet, is working to get "sweat-free food" ordinances on the books in major cities. The Oregon-based Food Alliance offers a "sustainable agriculture" certification to farmers who earn high scores in categories that include training their workers and establishing procedures to resolve conflicts.

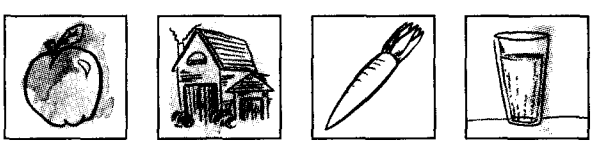
Sligh, the founding chair of the National Organic Standards Board, helps lead a coalition that is developing a social justice label to be used alongside organic certification. Placed on a fruit or vegetable, the sticker would signal to customers that the food was grown under equitable conditions, on a farm that provides healthcare and respects workers' right to organize. Members of the New Jersey–based Farmworkers Support Committee played a key role in developing the program, which hits natural food stores next year. The goal is to educate consumers about labor issues while helping small farmers differentiate themselves in their competition with agribusiness.

"When consumers vote with their food dollars, they have tremendous power," says Sligh. "Every time we go to the grocery store we're choosing what kind of food system we want."

One challenge could be convincing retailers. Whole Foods has resisted advertising products as "fair trade," a similar labeling system that guarantees Third World farmers an adequate price for their goods. "We find labeling products 'fair trade' is unfair because it insinuates that other products sold in our stores are unfairly traded. And that's simply not true," Ashley Hawkins, a spokesperson for the chain, told me.

In the end, whether such a labeling system succeeds may depend on the willingness and ability of consumers and workers to connect across boundaries of race, class and geography. Since 2003, Americans concerned about animal welfare have been able to buy meat, poultry and eggs with a "Certified Humane" label guaranteeing that the livestock were raised with good shelter and a nutritious diet. Can organic food buyers be persuaded to show the same care for their fellow humans? If the labeling advocates have their way, we're about to find out. ■

Hog Hell



SMITHFIELD'S WORKERS FACE A MODERN-DAY JUNGLE *by Eric Schlosser*

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*. Its depiction of unchecked greed and exploitation in the American meatpacking industry unfortunately remains relevant. A few months ago the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld a December 2000 ruling by an administrative law judge at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The case involved the behavior of the Smithfield Packing Company between 1992 and 1998 at its plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina—the largest hog slaughterhouse in the world. According to the appeals court, Smithfield had violated a wide variety of labor laws and created "an atmosphere of intimidation and coercion" in order to prevent workers at the plant from joining the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union.

Here are some of the details: Smithfield threatened to close the plant if workers voted to join the UFCW. It harassed workers who supported the union and paid other workers to spy on them. It forced union supporters to distribute anti-union literature. It fired workers for backing the union. It asked workers to lie during their testimony to the NLRB and refused to hand over company videotapes that the government had subpoenaed. During a union election in 1997, two UFCW supporters were beaten and arrested by security officers and deputy sheriffs. The chief of security at the slaughterhouse—who also served as a local deputy sheriff—carried handcuffs and a gun on the job. Between 2000 and 2005 he ran a company police force, operating in the plant and staffed with other deputy sheriffs, that arrested almost a hundred workers, including UFCW supporters.

One of the most remarkable things about Smithfield's behavior is that it was criticized by a branch of the federal government. Since George W. Bush took office in January 2001, the meatpacking industry has wielded more power than at any other time since the early twentieth century. The Bush Administration has worked closely with the industry to weaken food safety and worker safety rules and to make union organizing more difficult. The US Department of Agriculture now offers a textbook example of a regulatory agency controlled by the industry it's supposed to regulate. The current chief of staff at the USDA was, until 2001, the chief lobbyist for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Meanwhile, the sort of abuses criticized in the NLRB's Smithfield decision are still being committed. A recent Human Rights

Eric Schlosser is the author of the bestseller Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal *and, with Charles Wilson,* Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food *(both Houghton Mifflin). The movie version of* Fast Food Nation, *directed by Richard Linklater, will be released on November 17.*

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Watch report on the US meatpacking industry found "systematic human rights violations." Lance Compa, the author of the report, teaches labor law at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Compa interviewed many workers at the Smithfield plant in Tar Heel. What's happening there, he says, is "a modern-day version of *The Jungle*."

While visiting Chicago slaughterhouses for research in 1904, Upton Sinclair met Eastern European immigrants employed at dangerous, dirty, low-wage jobs. Union organizers and injured workers were being harassed and fired. The publication of *The Jungle* two years later caused a public uproar—about the widespread contamination of meat, not the mistreatment of meatpacking workers. The book helped President Theodore Roosevelt gain passage of two important pieces of legislation, the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act. But it didn't accomplish much for meatpacking workers. Conditions gradually improved in the nation's slaughterhouses, thanks to years of labor organizing. The industry fought hard against unions, pitting one Eastern European immigrant group against another and recruiting African-Americans as strikebreakers. By the 1930s, however, most of the industry was unionized. And by the 1950s meatpacking workers had one of the highest-paid manufacturing jobs in the United States. It wasn't always a pleasant job, but it provided a solid, middle-class income.

In 1970 the typical American meatpacking worker earned about 20 percent more than the typical factory worker. Today he or she earns about 20 percent less. Enormous changes have swept through the industry over the past thirty years, as big companies swallowed up small ones, moved slaughterhouses from urban areas (where unions were strong) to rural areas (where unions were weak), imported poor immigrants from Mexico and ruthlessly cut wages by as much as 50 percent. Today meatpacking workers have one of the lowest-paid manufacturing jobs in the United States—and one of the most dangerous. At a modern slaughterhouse hundreds of people work at a furious pace, close to one another, wielding sharp knives. The most common injury is a laceration, as workers stab themselves or a worker nearby.

When my book *Fast Food Nation* was published in 2001, the meatpacking industry had the nation's highest rate of serious injury. It was about three times higher than the national average for factories, despite widespread underreporting of slaughterhouse injuries. The rate of cumulative trauma injury in meatpacking was about thirty-three times higher than the national average. Today it's impossible to know how many meatpacking workers are really getting hurt. In 2002 the Occupational Safety and Health Administration changed the form that companies must use to record meatpacking injuries—and thereby reduced the injury rate by 50 percent. "Recordable safety incident rate in plants cut in half since 1996," the American Meat Institute announced in a press release, giving the industry credit for the miraculous decline, picking 1996 as a year of comparison to mislead journalists and never mentioning that the 50 percent drop was due entirely to the government's bookkeeping change.

Tar Heel is located in one of the poorest regions of North Carolina, with a faltering rural economy and sharp racial divi-

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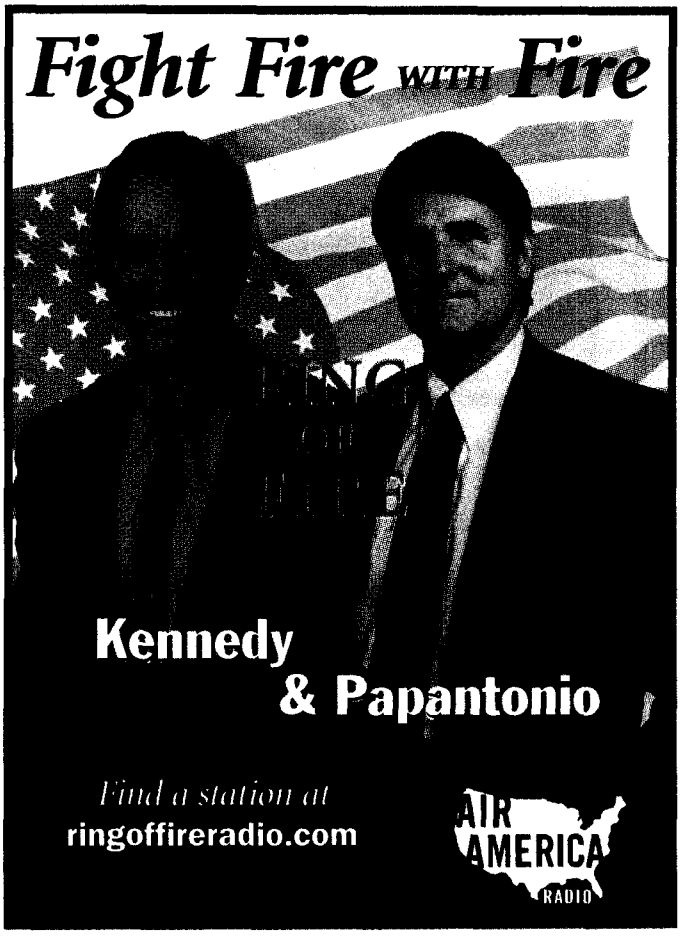

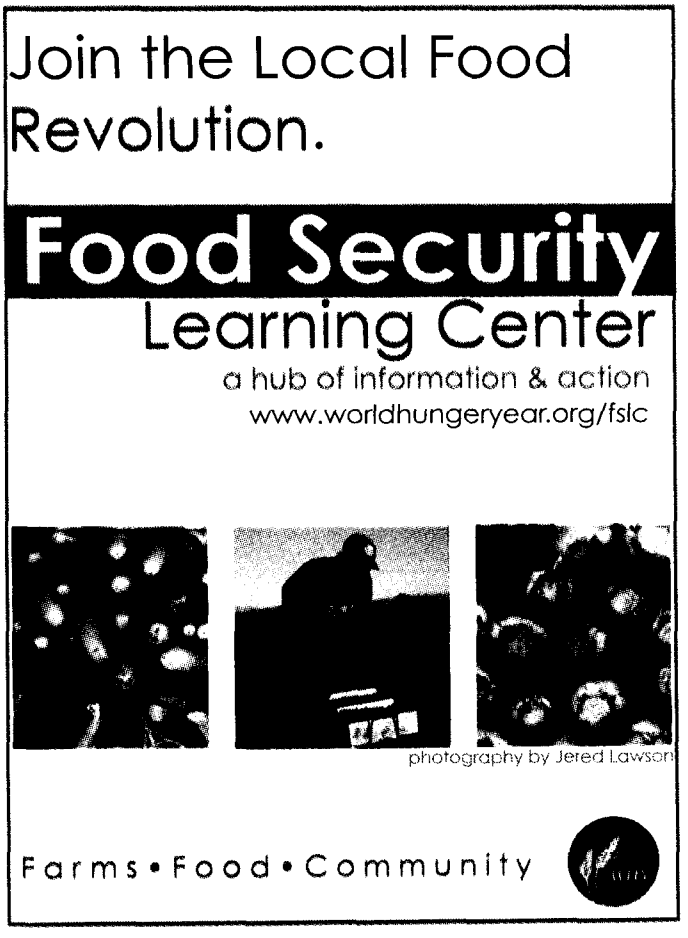

sions among the local whites, African-Americans and Native Americans. The Smithfield plant, which opened in 1992, only added to the racial tension. Charlie LeDuff, a *New York Times* reporter who worked undercover at the plant in 2000, described a brutal, segregated workplace where whites were employed as supervisors, blacks did the heavy lifting on the kill floor and Mexican immigrants were given the worst jobs. Inmates on work-release, wearing green prison uniforms, were placed with the Mexicans. In one sense the company was an equal-opportunity employer, LeDuff noted: "The Smithfield plant will take just about any man or woman with a pulse and a sparkling urine sample, with few questions asked." Testifying before a US Senate committee a couple of years later, Sherri Bufkin, a former supervisor at the slaughterhouse, explained some of Smithfield's racial policies. "Management hired a special outside consultant from California to run the anti-union campaign in Spanish for the Latinos, who were seen as easy targets of manipulation because they could be threatened with immigration issues," Bufkin said. "The word was that black workers were going to be replaced with Latino workers because blacks were more favorable to unions."

The NLRB decision strongly condemned Smithfield's actions during union elections in 1994 and 1997, both of which ended with the UFCW's defeat. The fact that it took so many years for the federal government to act suggests that the nation's labor laws have become largely meaningless. Smithfield was neither fined nor indicted for breaking the law. None of its executives were punished. The company was merely ordered to post the NLRB decision at the Tar Heel plant, rehire several workers who were illegally fired and hold another union election. "Smithfield looks forward to an election by secret ballot," Joseph Luter IV, the president of Smithfield Packing Company, wrote in an editorial in June. Although Smithfield has decided to accept the NLRB's findings, the company still denies that any of them are true. Gene Bruskin, director of the UFCW's Smithfield campaign, thinks it's impossible to hold a free or fair election at the Smithfield plant. Bruskin hopes that growing pressure from civil rights leaders, religious groups and immigrant-rights groups will convince Smithfield executives to sit down with the union and discuss how workers can join the UFCW without being threatened or harassed. On August 30 UFCW supporters from around the country plan to demand justice for Smithfield workers at the company's annual shareholder meeting in Richmond, Virginia.

Meanwhile, the industry continues to peddle its version of reality. In June the American Meat Institute held a luncheon for journalists in Washington, DC, to celebrate Upton Sinclair and the passage of the 1906 Meat Inspection Act. French champagne was served, glasses were raised in honor of the centennial and a commemorative booklet was handed out. It outlines the industry's labor, environmental and food safety policies, with the title: "If Upton Sinclair were alive today... He'd be *Amazed* by the U.S. Meat Industry." That much is true. He would be amazed—by how little has fundamentally changed, how brazenly a new set of immigrants is being exploited in a familiar way, how old lies are being repeated. But you'd never catch him at that luncheon, sponsored by an industry that tried so hard to destroy him. If Upton Sinclair were alive today, you would find him in Tar Heel, North Carolina, fighting for the union and angry as hell. ■

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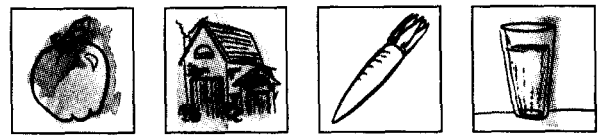
Mean or Green?



WAL-MART'S ORGANIC TURN DIVIDES THE MOVEMENT *by Liza Featherstone*

A laughing baby is covered in baby food. He's making a gushy mess, as babies do, but having a grand time. A magic word reassures us—before we've had a chance to worry—that the food itself is wholesome. That word, of course, is "organic." More surprising, to many viewers of this advertisement, will be the origin of this virtuous feast: Wal-Mart. This summer, the mega-retailer launched a multimillion-dollar ad campaign with an irresistible promise: "Introducing Organics at the Wal-Mart price." The commercial, which cannily plays to mothers' worries about how pesticides and additives may affect their children's health, has run on network and cable TV; a print version will appear in *Parenting*, *Real Simple*, *Self* and *Cooking Light*. Already one of the nation's leading organics vendors, Wal-Mart announced this past spring its intention to enter the market far more aggressively, to double its inventory and eventually offer organics at only 10 percent above the price of conventional food.

Food bearing the government's organic label can be, for low- and middle-income shoppers, prohibitively expensive. That's why, to many observers, an "organic Wal-Mart" represents the democratization of healthier—and better-tasting—food. Bob Scowcroft of the Organic Farming Research Foundation argues, too, that environmentalists should cheer Wal-Mart's move, which will "turn hundreds of thousands of acres" now being farmed conventionally to organic. "Think of the tonnage of toxins and carcinogens which will disappear from the earth," he says. Scowcroft also points to research by the Swiss government showing that organic farming can reduce global warming—actually drawing nitrogen and carbon from the atmosphere. Like the retailer's push for fuel-efficient trucking, Wal-Mart's entry into the organic sector could turn out to be another example of how one decision by this company—however market-driven—might do tremendous good, simply because of its scale.

But while there are potential upsides to Wal-Mart's move, it also offers plenty of reasons to worry. To advocates of local economies, like Judy Wicks, founder of Philadelphia's White Dog Cafe and co-chair of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, an organic Wal-Mart could do "more harm than good" because of the changes it will bring about in the organic food industry. For example, she cites Wal-Mart's likely impact on many small farmers. In other industries Wal-Mart's aggressive competition has proved devastating to small producers, from TV manufacturers to conventional pork farmers. Though Wal-Mart, like Whole Foods, has agreed to source some products locally, most family-scale organic farmers will not supply big-box retailers directly. But many farmers will nonetheless struggle to meet Wal-Mart's price, in order to supply competing retailers or simply hang on to customers. "Every farmer has to compete because Wal-Mart is in every market," explains Mark Kastel, senior farm policy analyst at the Cornucopia Institute, a progressive research group that advocates for small farmers. "From an economic justice standpoint," he adds, Wal-Mart's plan to go more aggressively organic is "a disaster" because it could prove ruinous for so many family farms.

Some of the concern over small farmers may be sentimental, a remnant of our national identity as a land of Jeffersonian citizen-yeomen. And some detect, in the progressive reaction to Wal-Mart's organic ambitions, a whiff of countercultural cliqueishness. Gary Hirshberg, president of Stonyfield Farm, which supplies organic yogurt to Wal-Mart, is a former hippie who lived on an organic solar- and wind-powered farm in the 1960s and '70s. He dismisses Wal-Mart critics in the organic movement as "activists who don't want to think of organic as a segment. They think of it as a lifestyle." To Hirshberg, organic Wal-Mart is a sign of the movement's success, and those who don't like it are elitist purists, dedicated to their own marginality.

But there are unsentimental reasons to root for small farmers in this drama. They are important to a progressive vision, partly because they are more likely to be farming organic out of principle than a large corporation is and thus more inclined not to cut corners and compromise standards. People who live on their farms with their families also have a compelling incentive to treat the land better. Regina Beidler is a Mennonite who lives with her dairy-farmer husband, Brent, and 8-year-old daughter, Erin, on 145 acres with forty cows in Randolph Center, Vermont. Because the Beidlers farm organically—which as defined by the Department of Agriculture means no pesticides, petroleum-based fertilizers or sewage-sludge-based fertilizers—Erin roams the farm freely (her job is to push the button on the grain elevator). "It's reassuring to know she isn't being exposed to those [toxic] substances," says her mother. "It's much more child-friendly."

Perhaps even more convincingly, as groups like the Organic Consumers Association point out, transporting food long distances is a staggering waste of energy and contributes to global warming. According to research by Brian Halweil of the Worldwatch Institute, our food typically travels 1,500 to 2,500 miles to reach our plate, 25 percent farther than in 1980. By the time we sit down to eat it, a meal from a conventional grocery store has used four to seventeen times more petroleum than a meal made from local ingredients. While Wal-Mart officials have expressed concern about the "food miles" issue, industry observers predict that most of Wal-Mart's produce will travel significant distances—Chile, Kenya and China are some of the likeliest low-cost sources, according to Mary Hendrickson, director of the University of Missouri's Food Circles Networking Project—raising confusing questions about whether organic Wal-Mart will, on balance, hurt or help the planet. (Just to confuse the environmental issue still more, Bob

Liza Featherstone, a Nation *contributing editor, is a Ralph Shikes Fellow at the Public Concern Foundation.*

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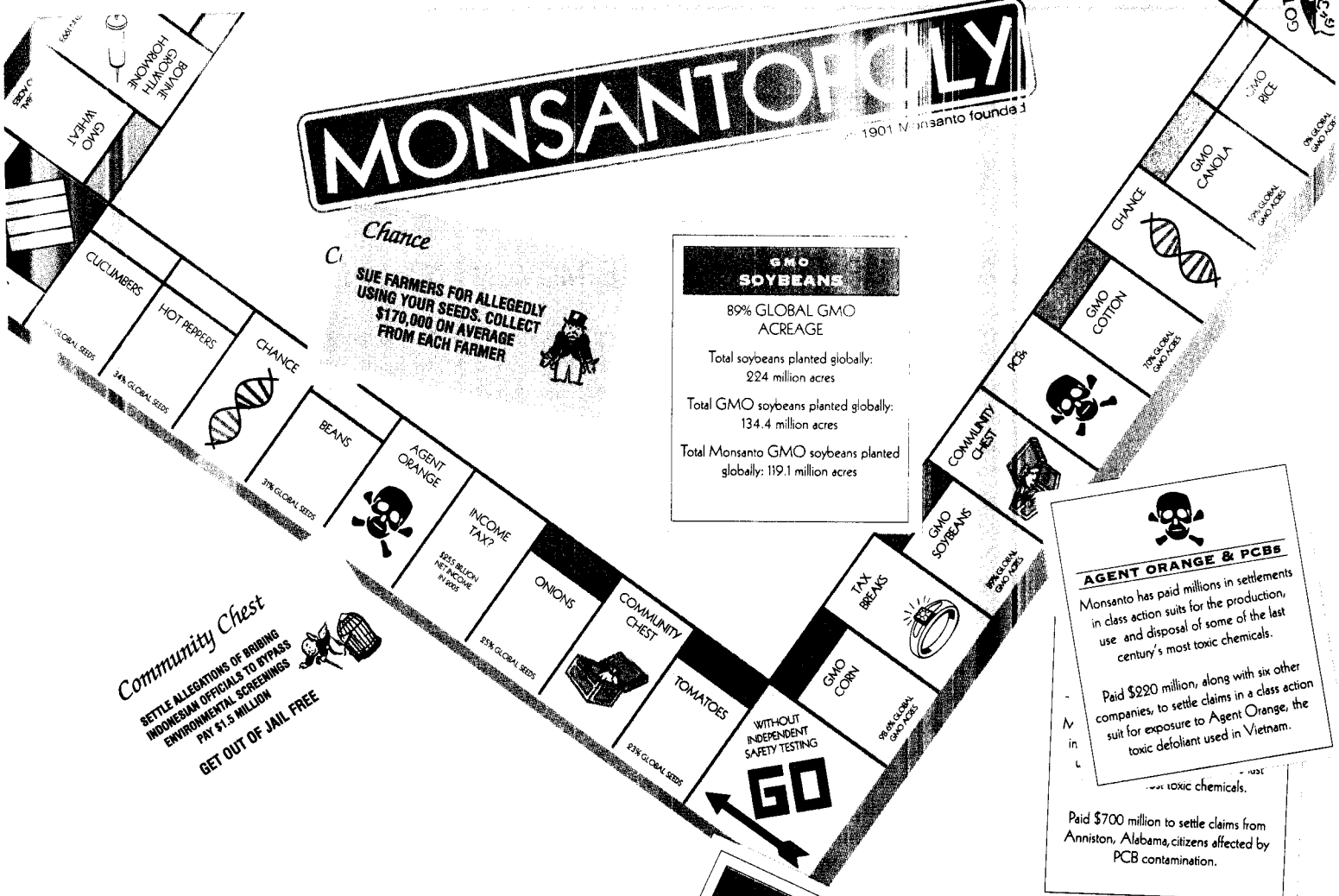
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GMO CORN
TAX BREAKS
GMO SOYBEANS
COMMUNITY CHEST
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GMO COTTON
CHANCE
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GMO CORN
98.6% GLOBAL GMO ACREAGE
Proponents of GMOs claim that the technology will improve agricultural yields and decrease pesticide use. In the ten years since GMOs were introduced into the commercial market here, they have not boosted yields and their use has led to an overall increase in pesticides.
0% GLOBAL GMO ACREAGE
(as of now)
Monsanto is piloting GMO rice, but so far has not released a variety commercially. Resistance to Monsanto's GMO rice has been particularly fierce among farmers in developing countries.
TOMATOES
23% GLOBAL SEED MARKET
$1.4 billion: Cost of 2005 acquisition of Seminis, supplier of over 3,500 fruit and vegetable seed varieties in 150 countries.
Monsanto, Dupont, Syngenta and Bayer —among the world's biggest pesticide manufacturers—are four of the ten companies that now control 49% of the global seed market.
Community Chest
1980 US Supreme Court Diamond v. Chakrabarty determined that a live, human-made micro-organism is patentable subject matter.
Advanced Tokes to go.

GMO Giant

by Anna Lappé and Matthew Willse

In the past two decades, the St. Louis–based former chemical giant Monsanto has come to dominate the market for genetically modified organisms (GMOs). With its 2005 acquisition of Seminis, Monsanto became the world's biggest commercial seed company for old-fashioned crops, too.

GMO critics raise concerns about GMOs' potential impact on our environment, food security and health. But the US government has refused even to mandate labeling of foods that contain GMOs. Released in the United States with only industry-conducted safety testing, GMOs are now found in at least three-quarters of foods in our supermarkets.

Sources: GMO acreage based on Monsanto-reported planting combined with the industry-sponsored ISAAA figures of global GMO acreage. Global seed market data from ETC Group.

Graphic by Anna Lappé and Matthew Willse of theCoup.org.
Research support provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.

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Scowcroft points out that converting all those acres in China will clean up a lot of groundwater there, which is obviously good for the Chinese.)

Most small organic farmers interviewed for this article believed that in organics, as in many other sectors, Wal-Mart's low prices would, ultimately, mean lower standards. Stonyfield Farm's Hirshberg, who has had many discussions with Wal-Mart officials about the company's commitment to organics, says Wal-Mart does not plan to lower its price by lowering standards; rather, he says, Wal-Mart is committed to delivering the savings through efficiencies within its own system. But Wal-Mart's behavior as a major player in the organic dairy industry has already suggested otherwise. It has also provided a window on how the company will treat small organic farmers: just fine, until they can no longer provide the lowest possible price.

When Wal-Mart began selling organic milk, one of its first suppliers was Organic Valley, a cooperative of small farmers committed to organic principles. Organic Valley farmers, including Regina Beidler, were proud to be reaching Wal-Mart's customers, people like themselves who were struggling to make ends meet. But Organic Valley faced a milk shortage, so when the co-op found itself outpriced by a competitor, Horizon, which is owned by Dean Foods, the farmers decided not to engage in a price war to stay on the Wal-Mart shelf but to continue supplying the smaller food stores that had long formed the backbone of their customer base. "We didn't want to make compromises," says Organic Valley CEO and farmer George Siemon, meaning that the farmers needed to get a fair price while maintaining their product's integrity.

Horizon, which controls 55 percent of the organic dairy market, meets Wal-Mart's low price in part by providing appalling conditions for its cows. The Cornucopia Institute's Mark Kastel, first reached for this article as he was standing on Horizon's 4,000-cow Idaho feedlot, says the cows were "standing in 90-degree heat. No shade, no water. These animals are living very short lives." (To be considered "organic," animals—whether they are raised for meat, milk or eggs—must be given some access to the outdoors. It is an irony of the bureaucracy and inequity surrounding federal certification that by following the letter if not the spirit of such regulations—that is, for some of their lives Horizon's cows are outside, even if they have no room to move around—Horizon can call its milk organic, while many small farmers, whose cows roam freely and munch on grass, cannot; in many cases the farmers can't afford the expense of the certification process, or are put off by the paperwork.) The Organic Consumers Association has urged shoppers to boycott Horizon. As savvy consumers learn that sometimes the organic label tells an incomplete story, Organic Valley stands to benefit. "Organic Valley has long been built on the idea that family farming is a better way to give care to animals and the land," Siemon says diplomatically. "Consumers have a hard time believing that large factory farms are really organic."

To be sure, some family-scale organic farmers are benefiting from Wal-Mart's entry into the industry. Horizon buys at least half its milk from hundreds of small-scale farmers, as even a dogged critic like Kastel, author of a report called "Maintaining

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the Integrity of Organic Milk," acknowledges. And while Organic Valley isn't supplying Wal-Mart directly anymore, some Organic Valley milk does end up, much transformed, in the Wal-Mart customer's shopping cart: Stonyfield Farm buys milk from the cooperative to make organic yogurt. Says Stonyfield's Hirshberg: "If you're serious and sincere about family farms, then your ultimate goal is to be in Wal-Mart, to be where food is sold."

Still, the Horizon/Wal-Mart alliance is potentially ominous for family-scale dairy farmers, because, as Kastel points out, "there's a shortage today, but a year from now," as producers rush to meet the demands of big retailers like Wal-Mart, "you could have a surplus." A milk surplus could erode the organic premium and drive many small organic dairy farmers into bankruptcy, just as it has wiped out many of their conventional neighbors. Organic farmers, especially in the Northeast, are already in a precarious situation because of high fuel, grain and transportation costs. Travis Forgues, a second-generation farmer in Alburg, Vermont, the state's farthest-northwest town, milks eighty grass-fed cows. A 33-year-old father of three young children, he speaks for many small farmers when he says, "If we didn't have the organic market, my dad and I would have been out of here long ago." On the danger of a surplus fueled by demand from Wal-Mart and other big-box stores, Forgues says, "Anyone who's not worried about what's going to happen is crazy."

With Wal-Mart on the scene, the strength of alternative institutions like co-ops will determine the fate of small organic farmers.

With Wal-Mart on the scene, the strength of alternative and local economic institutions will determine whether small farmers like Forgues survive. With 871 farmers and growing, Organic Valley, the largest organic farmers' cooperative in the country, is still going strong even without Wal-Mart's business, maintaining farmer control while still distributing on an impressive scale. (In the grocery store on my corner in New York City, which is not a natural-food store or a food co-op, Organic Valley milk is sold right next to Horizon, and that's the case in stores all over the country.) Farmers agree that the co-op model is critical, helping them maintain some power in an increasingly concentrated market. "The farmer has to be in the driver's seat," says Forgues. Because of the organic milk shortage and the Organic Valley cooperative, he continues to get a fair price and has survived a difficult season far more easily than most of his farmer neighbors. Of Wal-Mart, he says, "We're not going to cut our price so we can get onto that shelf. We have to make sure farmers don't get removed from the process, as happened in the conventional food market."

In a nod to the savvy consumer's growing interest in nearby food, Organic Valley is in the process of regionalizing many of its operations, so that even though farmers in twenty-three states belong to the co-op, customers in New England buying Organic Valley milk will be, increasingly, buying from New England farmers. Farmers' markets, which are growing in popularity, will also be critical institutions in the organic Wal-Mart era. Jim Goodman, a Wisconsin dairy farmer who tends 400 certified-organic acres with his brother, sells to a local cheesemaker (as well as directly to customers through mail order) but also relies on the weekly farmers' market in Madison, where he sells beef. He doesn't think Wal-Mart is going to affect his business. "People who come to the farmers' market are shopping there because they want to deal directly with the farmer," he says. "They want to meet the person who raised it, put it in their hand. When they get home they can say, 'This came from Mike, this came from Jim.' When you're sitting down to dinner that makes so much difference. I'd be surprised if they would go to Wal-Mart just because it's cheaper."

For local food to become more than a niche market and begin to transform our relationship to the environment, however, energy is going to have to be a lot more expensive. For the majority of Americans to have the incentive to buy local, the cost of food transport would have to reflect its true environmental costs. Many local food advocates speak—half with alarm, half wishfully—of "peak oil," the notion that we are running out of oil and will soon be forced to grow our own food and cooperate with our neighbors. That neo-primitivist scenario, if it ever comes to pass, is not going to arrive nearly quickly enough to substitute for the necessary work of persuading Americans to change our lifestyles, and advocating policies that conserve energy.

"Consumers have to be more educated," says Goodman. He thinks it's important to tell people why the prices are higher: Organic is not overpriced; rather, conventional food is cheap because its costs are passed along to the environment, small farmers and the health of those who eat it. "If people can't afford to buy organic," he says, "it's because they are not paid enough in their jobs, and don't have health insurance." That, Goodman insists, should be part of a broader economic justice agenda: A living wage should allow a person to buy responsibly grown, healthy food for her family. "With organic food," he explains, "there's no hidden cost." It's also true that at farmers' markets and roadside stands, organic food is often cheaper than in stores, because there's no profiteering middleman.

Taking their case to the shopper, Organic Valley farmers like Travis Forgues have been traveling the country on speaking tours. The Organic Consumers Association is working to create a domestic fair-trade group, whose label would assure the consumer that food was produced in a way that was environmentally and socially responsible—giving an edge to smaller, more conscientious producers over Dean Foods. With the goal, too, of making local organic produce affordable to the poorest Wal-Mart shoppers—those who will probably never be able to afford a meal at the White Dog Cafe, which runs around $50—the OCA is also working to broaden a program making it easier for farmers' markets to accept food stamps.

Many organic farmers are social activists and idealists who care about the environment, animal rights and economic justice. But many are also entrepreneurial—and that's how they will survive the new era of big-box organic. The challenge Wal-Mart poses, says Bob Scowcroft, is "to get consumers who discover organics at the Wal-Mart to get out of their car and to the farmers' market." ■

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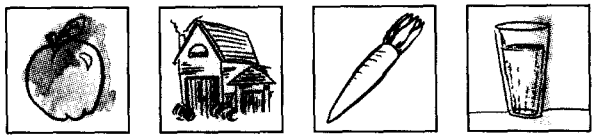
Doing Lunch



ANN COOPER SERVES UP A NEW VISION OF SCHOOL FOOD *by Anna Lappé*

It has not been easy to find time to talk with chef Ann Cooper since she became director of nutrition services last October for the Berkeley, California, Unified School District, where she oversees gardening programs at eleven schools and food programs at sixteen, covering 10,000 children. It turns out 6 in the morning is the best time for an uninterrupted interview. "Because we're closed in the summer," she explained, "I can sleep until 5:30."

How did this white-tablecloth-restaurant gourmet chef become one of the nation's leading advocates for healthy school food? Cooper, whose book Lunch Lessons: Changing the Way We Feed Our Children *is out from HarperCollins this September, talked with me by phone from her home in Moss Beach, California.* —*Anna Lappé*

For years, you were head chef at Vermont's tony Putney Inn. How did you go from that line of work to being, as you like to call yourself, a lunch lady?

I had just finished my first book, *Bitter Harvest*, and had begun to get interested in sustainable agriculture and angry about how we're feeding our kids. Around that time, I got a call asking me to apply for the position at the Ross School in East Hampton [New York] to transform their school food program and make it truly sustainable, including buying as much local food as possible. Lunch lady? I thought: Not interested! But I went to look at the school anyway. As soon as I got there, I fell in love with it. My time cooking lobster sushi Napoleons for rich people was over; it was time to try to make the world a better place. I took the job.

It's been less than a year since you came on board as head of nutrition services for the City of Berkeley's public schools. How much have you been able to change so far?

We've been able to change everything: We've gone from 95 percent processed foods to 95 percent made from scratch. When we reopen, every school will have a salad bar. We have only hormone- and antibiotic-free dairy and offer fresh fruit and vegetables at every meal.

We instituted a swipe-card system, so that instead of reduced-meal kids being conspicuously checked off a list, every child swipes a card to pay. We've eliminated the stigma about who is free and who is not.

We canceled all of our food contracts and are now buying

EDIBLE NOLA

Ten years strong at the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, California, Alice Waters's Edible Schoolyard is sprouting new growth at the Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans, the site of Waters's first full-blown satellite program. Waters calls the visionary curriculum "eco-gastronomy." It teaches the whole child through some of the most basic human endeavors: gardening, cooking, serving and eating. The Edible Schoolyard isn't about having a little garden—it's a radical program meant to address issues of hunger, health and sustainability.

And it works. According to a study by Harvard Medical School, after only one year students at King demonstrated improved behavior, fewer emotional problems, higher grade-point averages and a better grasp of ecology.

The Edible Schoolyard, Waters says, "teaches children their moral obligation to be caretakers and stewards of the finite resources of our planet. And it teaches them the joy of the table, the pleasures of real work and the meaning of community.

"School gardens turn pop culture upside down: They teach redemption through a deep appreciation for the real, the authentic and the lasting—for the things that money can't buy: the very things that matter most of all if we are going to lead sane, healthy and sustainable lives," she explains.

Surely, post-Katrina New Orleans is sorely in need of the real, the authentic and the lasting. Like everything else in the city, our renowned and unique indigenous food culture is in jeopardy. That's why the curriculum includes an oral history component. Students learn local classics like red beans and rice and gumbo, grow some of the ingredients themselves and interview their parents about how they cook these dishes and how their parents cooked them. "We hope to renew New Orleans one okra plant and one child at a time," says Green principal Tony Recasner.

Recasner, a psychologist and former Loyola University faculty member, opened Green School in January—four months after Katrina. Of the 400 children in grades K–8, 99 percent are African-American, 75 percent are from single-parent homes and the vast majority (95 percent) qualify for the federal free-lunch program. Although development of the garden and the kitchen classroom will take time, food is already a critical part of the Green School curriculum. Students will be involved in planning the garden and will visit with local farmers and chefs. And cafeteria food purchased from Louisiana farmers will insure that they eat "fresh and local" while the school puts down roots in its community.

Randy Fertel co-sponsors the Ridenhour Prizes with The Nation Institute and teaches literature at the New School for Social Research. For more information about the Edible Schoolyard, visit www.edibleschoolyard.org or contact Diana Pinckley at diana@zehno.com. The Ruth U. Fertel Foundation (which he heads) has provided funding for the program.

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much of our food from locally owned businesses. All of our Mexican food is made by a locally owned Hispanic company; all of our baked products come from a local, women-owned company.

These meals sound like they cost much more than the standard school meals.

It costs about 18 percent more per kid per lunch—which is about 50 cents a day—more than what we get in reimbursements from the Feds and the state. (That's not just for food; it includes labor—but not overhead, which adds another 50 cents.)

But there's cost and then there's price: Yes, you can buy things at a cheaper price, but what's the real cost? When you include fossil fuels used in food production, and the several-billion-a-month war in Iraq, what is the real price? When you think about the health of kids, and the $117 billion a year we spend for diet-related illnesses every year, what is the real price?

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that of US children born in the year 2000—the 6-year-olds starting school this year—one out of three will develop diabetes in their lifetime. With those figures, how can we not think spending a little more on food is worthwhile?

You're in Berkeley, arguably the nation's foodie hotbed. Would these kinds of changes have legs anywhere else?

In part, we've been able to do what we've done so quickly because of the supportive community here and the groundwork laid by the Center for Ecoliteracy and the Chez Panisse Foundation, but there are pockets of change everywhere. New York City, the country's largest school district, has been making changes, bringing in local, fresh foods. Santa Monica has a great salad bar program. Marin County has a wonderful program connecting organic farmers with local schools.

The change you're promoting seems to be a no-brainer: Obviously we should feed our kids healthy food. So why aren't we seeing even more change than the "pockets" you describe?

Well, who benefits if we fix this? If diabetes goes away, who wins? If there is no high-fructose corn syrup, who wins? Agribusiness, the medical-industrial complex, the government, don't benefit. So who is going to push this? That's the real problem. The welfare and health of our children are being mortgaged by big business.

We need to see school lunch as part of a health initiative, not just as a dumping ground for agribusiness. School food service is now administered by the US Department of Agriculture, which is basically a marketing arm for agribusiness. Really, school food should be housed in Health and Human Services or the Centers for Disease Control.

For most of us, it's been many years since we had a school lunch. Jog our memory. What's different about an Ann Cooper lunch and a typical school lunch?

A typical lunch would be chicken fingers, tater tots, maybe a carrot stick and canned fruit cocktail made with high-fructose corn syrup and, of course, milk. [According to federal guidelines] you have to serve a grain, but a tater tot or a chicken finger is considered a grain because it is breaded.

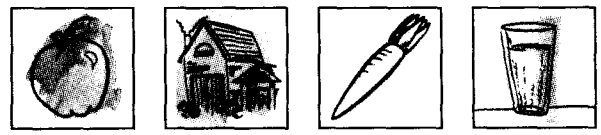
Our lunch would be something like roast chicken, a baked potato wedge. We absolutely always include a fresh vegetable, like broccoli or squash, and a fresh fruit. And we now have a salad bar in every school.

The transformation you're talking about is huge. The school food program in the United States is a multibillion-dollar industry. What will it take to transform the whole system?

Look, this is not brain surgery. It's not that I'm so special that I've been able to figure this out; it's just because I care that we're able to do this. If I can do this, anybody can. I'm a high school dropout, for goodness' sake. We just have to care enough to make it a priority. We have to have the will to stand up and say we're going to serve our kids healthy food and that we have to do it because we're killing our kids. ■

Anna Lappé is the co-author of Grub: Ideas for an Urban Organic Kitchen *and the national bestselling* Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet *(both Tarcher/Penguin).*

How Harlem Eats



URBAN ACTIVISTS SEEK 'FOOD JUSTICE' *by Mark Winston Griffith*

The pizza served at the Harlem spot Raw Soul could hardly be considered traditional African-American Southern fare. The "buckwheat, carrots, and flax, topped with a walnut/brazil nut cheese and sun-dried tomato pizza sauce" isn't fried or dripping with flavorful grease. Still, there's something about it—the rich colors, the multiple textures—that seems to tell the story of a black and soulful experience. "People have an emotional connection to food," explained Lillian Butler, who, along with her husband, Eddie Robinson, is an owner-chef of Raw Soul. "We provide that here." Raw Soul is more than a restaurant and juice bar. It serves as a nutrition and healthy-lifestyle educational center, as well as a hub for a diverse group of people who are determined to shift Harlem's food consciousness.

One of the local food activists who frequent Raw Soul is Moriba Jackson. When Jackson thinks of buying food she always sees color. Not just the race of the people who populate Harlem and the South Bronx, the areas where she lives and works, but the color of the local food itself. Jackson tells the story of buying a head of lettuce from a corner grocery store

Mark Winston Griffith is a fellow at the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy and co-director of the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.

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in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx and forgetting it in her office refrigerator. When she returned to the lettuce more than a month later it was as if it had been suspended in time, with only one small brown spot betraying its advanced age.

"I ran around my office screaming, asking what was going on with this food," Jackson, a 36-year-old African-American, recalls. Within a year Jackson had joined an effort in Harlem to start a food-buying club, a cooperative association that allows people to pre-order fresh, seasonal foods from farmers or distributors at wholesale prices.

BLACK FARMS, BLACK MARKETS

In a playground in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, with the giggles and squeals of frolicking children providing background noise, David Haughton sets up his tent and carries over crates from his truck. He comes here every week to sell his organic produce, which includes peaches, plums and apples, and novelties like callaloo, an Afro-Caribbean vegetable that he says "really sells." Brought up on a farm in Jamaica, where farming is the second-largest industry, Haughton immigrated to America in 1983, earning a living as a farmworker until he was able to buy his own thirty-acre farm in Clintondale, New York. He and Vermont farmer Ras Oba have been coming to Hecksher playground every week since 2005, when they were sought out by community activist Asantewaa Gail Harris, whose interest in health-related issues provided the impetus for her vision of a neighborhood farmers' market.

"In 2002 I attended the National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health," says Harris. "What we discovered was that the statistics they were reporting reflected our friends, our family members and our neighbors. So it was real." In the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, one in four adults and one in three children are obese, and the neighborhood is home to 131 bodegas, where fresh produce is a rarity. Harris and her group, the Community Vision Council, began researching. "We had been around to all of the Greenmarkets in the city and did not see farmers of color." Harris says she knew about black farmers' ongoing battle with the US Department of Agriculture, and considered it important to support them.

Now that the Hecksher market has proven a success, Harris has been contacted by other New York City organizers who want to set up farmers' markets in their own neighborhoods. Harris hopes to obtain enough funding to furnish the Bed-Stuy market with supplies and create a program that would allow black farmers to mentor residents.

Richard Pearson of Southside, Virginia, embodies the struggles facing black farmers, most of whom farm in the South. He says his white competitors have links to markets through business contacts that are unavailable to black farmers: "That was the difference fifty years ago, and it's still the difference now." Pearson's 200 acres make him one of the five largest black landowners in his two counties. In 1970, however, Pearson saw blacks farming 1,000-acre tracts. His experience is reflected in the statistics: While the number of white farmers has declined by roughly a third, almost 80 percent of black farmers have disappeared in the past thirty years.

Arizona farmer Norvel Clark is fairly bursting with ideas about tapping urban markets, but he knows no urban food activists and says that at black farmer conferences, the innovative business proposals he's shared and his attempts to form partnerships with other farmers have so far fallen on fallow ground. "I assume that they're in so much turmoil, people have been lying to them for so long, that when you talk to them they don't take it to heart."

Clark, born in Puerto Rico, raised in Brooklyn and a relative newcomer to farming, having begun growing culinary herbs in 1990, was recognized for his green thumb while still in grade school and has had a passion to grow things ever since.

"I'm better than 100 percent organic. I'm natural," boasts Clark. Surrounded by farmland owned by the likes of Del Monte, Clark's 250-acre Hyder farm has expanded to include melons, vegetables and livestock. The way he sees it, black farmers hold the building blocks for a new inner-city economy. "I want to grow the best stuff and have the easiest market available." Clark has introduced his goods to the black community in Arizona by selling produce on consignment to three different churches in Casa Grande and Phoenix. Eventually, he hopes they will get other churches involved so that fresh food will become part of the culture of fellowship.

Jason Harvey, a food activist in Oakland, explains how the Mandela Farmers' Market he once managed has become a hub of community activity. He recalls how the market began to draw weekend crowds of 150–200 people, "which is pretty amazing, because people usually leave West Oakland to find something to do." Local musicians have flocked to the site, as well as merchants who sell books, incense and soaps. Mandela's founder, David Roach, observes: "Agriculture is just what it says, it has a lot of culture in it. It relates to health, it relates to economics, it's pride as people. Spiritually, it's about having that communion with the earth."

It remains to be seen whether a budding awareness of the politics of food will translate into mutually beneficial connections between inner-city "food deserts" and beleaguered black farmers. There seems to be a great need for people like farmer Phillip Barker, who directs the North Carolina–based Prize of the Harvest, which helps black farmers form co-ops and market their products. While acknowledging historical and institutional racism, Barker focuses on problems facing all small farmers. "What we find is that once we grow a crop, we don't have the systems in place to carry that crop to either get it processed or packed to regulations to go into the marketplace. We've done some things in the marketplace that haven't been done before by black farmers or black groups," he says, but all roads leading from their farms to the cities seem to be uphill for now.

Habiba Alcindor is The Nation*'s communications coordinator.*

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Jackson is among thousands of consumers who have organized buying clubs, joined CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) or sought out food cooperatives as a way to access healthy foods and to support neighborhood-based food delivery systems. But what she shares with a smaller subset of neighborhood food activists is a race- and class-based critique that weaves in notions of black community leadership and responsibility. For Jackson and others like her, "food justice" is not only about supporting local farmers, battling the corporate hold on food production and breaking the tyranny of bioengineered foods and a fast-food nation; it's also about using food as a means of re-educating, reinvigorating and liberating the black community.

Over the years, social science research has documented the race- and class-based differences in food access and consumption that were already obvious to many. For instance, *City Limits* magazine reported in 2004 that in New York City, the wealthiest residents have five times as many square feet of grocery-store space as do the city's poorest. A 2006 University of Michigan study conducted in New York, Maryland and North Carolina found that neighborhoods of color and racially mixed areas had half as many supermarkets as predominantly white neighborhoods and twice the number of smaller corner and bodega-like stores, which carry little fresh produce. Similarly, low-income neighborhoods were found to have half as many supermarkets as the wealthiest communities, but four times as many of the smaller stores. Low-income and nonwhite communities in general had fewer natural food stores and fresh produce markets.

Jackson, who said that her interest in community food alternatives was prompted in part by a desire to control her weight, was able to rattle off the locations of seven McDonald's within walking distance of her Harlem apartment. At the same time, she described taking two trains and a bus to get to a market that sold organic fruits and vegetables and a broad selection of healthy foods.

Recent attention to high obesity rates in communities of color—one study reported in *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* journal found that one-third of African-American and Mexican-American women are obese, compared with one-fifth of white women—has sparked attempts by legislators in New York to take on bodega and fast-food culture in those communities. Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, whose district includes the Bushwick section of Brooklyn and the Lower East Side of Manhattan, is working on legislation that would provide grants to community groups working to help bodegas build the capacity to offer fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods. City Councilman Joel Rivera from the Bronx recently created a stir when he called for hearings on whether New York City zoning laws could be used to restrict the concentration of fast-food joints in low-income areas. Meanwhile, in Washington, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program was established in 1992 to "provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables" to families on public assistance and to "expand the awareness, use of and sales at farmers' markets." Unfortunately, the federal food benefit per recipient is capped at $30 per year.

At the grassroots level, Melanie Lawrence, a 27-year-old vegetarian pursuing a masters in public health, talks about "building solidarity around the world" between people of African descent around issues of food access. She moves seamlessly from describing a rural area in Africa facing starvation because their farmers are forced into single-commodity production to singling out her local Pathmark in the black homeowner district of southeast Queens for paying low wages and selling lesser-quality, more highly priced food than the white neighborhood supermarket across the tracks.

Lawrence is a manager at Greenmarket, a nonprofit that works with the City of New York to link New York State farmers and their produce with New York consumers. Of its forty-five locations, at least one-third are located in neighborhoods of color. But even Greenmarkets, Melanie maintains, has a difficult time meeting black community interests, on both sides of the equation, because many black consumers cannot afford to shop at farmers' markets, while only a handful of blacks in New York State have been able to make a living through farming [see Habiba Alcindor, "Black Farms, Black Markets," page 37].

In Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant, a predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhood at the center of one of the largest concentrations of African-Americans in the country, Anayah Barney, a 23-year-old special education teacher, is one of several people organizing what she hopes will one day be the Kalabash Food Cooperative. For her the Kalabash organizing effort represents an approach to alternative food access that, while connecting her group to other black and Latino activists across the country, is somewhat distinct from what she perceives to be the governing philosophies of predominantly white-run alternative food initiatives. We are "bringing two conversations together," Barney insists, "one about access to good food and the other about black spending power and where the black community's money is going."

Although Barney praises the management of the nearby Park Slope Food Coop—which is, with more than 12,000 members and a thirty-three-year history, the largest wholly member-owned and -operated food co-op in the country—for being generously supportive of Kalabash, she acknowledges that some of Kalabash's leaders left the Park Slope Food Coop because they felt it wasn't particularly welcoming to black members.

Uptown, where Moriba Jackson's fledgling food-buying club mirrors the increasingly racially integrated, gentrifying composition of its contemporary Harlem setting, Jackson has also observed racial fault lines between the white and black participants, with the latter showing a keener interest in black community self-determination, as well as in specifically African-American health issues and in supporting black farmers and entrepreneurs.

But in the end, whether their primary interest lies in changing Harlem's relationship to what it eats or in Lillian Butler's pizza sauce, the multiracial crowd at Raw Soul comes together over healthy food. Some of Butler's loyal clientele even credit her with being the leader of a "movement." When asked to identify exactly what kind of movement they're referring to, Butler says, "This is not just about black people. It's not even just about food. It's about healing people." ■

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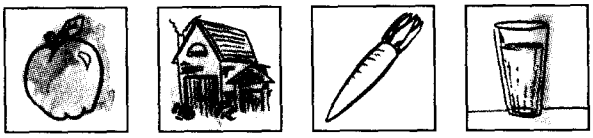
A Right to Food?



HOW TO FRAME THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER *by Frances Moore Lappé*

"If someone can't afford to buy food, they're still a citizen and we're still responsible to them," city official Adriana Aranha in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, told me in 2000. What a concept—and one that had helped her to lift her Workers' Party to victory in municipal elections seven years earlier.

Declaring healthy food a right of citizenship in Brazil's fourth-largest city, the new administration drew together voices from labor, the church and citizen groups. Their innovations, coordinated by a new city office of food security, range from twenty-five fair-price produce stands supplied by local farmers to open-air restaurants serving 12,000 subsidized meals daily to city-sponsored radio broadcasts leading shoppers to the lowest-priced essentials.

These and many more city-led initiatives to end hunger consume only 1 percent of Belo's budget, but they're working. Hard evidence is the city's infant death rate, a widely accepted measure of hunger, which fell an astonishing 56 percent over the first decade of these efforts. Belo's approach has inspired multiple right-to-food initiatives nationwide as part of President Lula's Zero Hunger Program.

Food was first declared a right in the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in 1993 at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, citizen organizations, especially the FoodFirst Information and Action Network, began demanding specific standards for the right to food. By 2004 the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization Council had adopted "voluntary guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food," with 187 governments signing on. Today, twenty-two countries have enshrined the right to food in their constitutions, either for all citizens or specifically for children.

Nonetheless, after a period of decline, the number of hungry people in the Global South rose from the mid-1990s over the following half-decade by almost 4 million a year.

It's easy to understand why legally establishing the right to food is an appealing strategy. Since most would agree we have a right to live, a right to food—essential to life—doesn't seem like a stretch. Maybe our evolutionary experience sets us up to agree. Except for the last few thousand of our roughly 200,000 years evolving, *Homo sapiens* lived in hunter-gatherer societies; and studying those remaining today, anthropologists find humans unique in our "pervasive sharing" of food, "especially among unrelated individuals," writes Michael Gurven, a leading authority on hunter-gatherer food transfers. Except in times of extreme privation, when some eat, all eat. And the most productive hunters share the most. This relational ethic may have been carried even into feudal times, as suggested by the root meaning of "lord"—keeper of the loaf, connoting responsibility to the whole.

Another strength of a "rights" frame is that it carries the presumption of an eventual mechanism for enforcement. In Brazil the country's National Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Food, Water and Rural Land, Flavio Valente, is already investigating what he calls "violations of the right to food."

Yet making a "right to eat" our essential frame for fighting hunger has pitfalls, too.

For one, rights and power are too easily uncoupled. Prisoners have a right to food, for instance...but their power? Even a totalitarian state can guarantee the right to food.

Also, hearing "rights," one can quickly slide into passive mode—to assumed provision by somebody else, as in the right to an education or to a jury trial, where it makes perfect sense. The frame doesn't necessarily spur people to envision and build their own power. It can also lead one to imagine an end-point state of being—something settled—not necessarily an unending process of citizen co-creation.

So might there be a more basic frame for addressing hunger? Yes, I think so. And it starts with power.

The need for power can run even deeper in human beings than our need to eat. Think of hunger strikes, where refusing to eat becomes a means to power. Philosopher Erich Fromm believed our need for efficacy to be so basic that he turned Descartes around: "I am, because I effect," he wrote.

Seeing the end of hunger from a "power frame" ignites a dynamic and energizing set of connections and actions. These are on most vivid display today in Latin America.

Beyond Belo's leadership, the Americas' largest social movement is Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which didn't start with a focus on the legal right to food. It organized among the landless and taught democratic concepts and skills, including group decision-making, civil disobedience and, more recently, gender equity. The result is MST's bottom-up power, with which a third of a million families have created 2,000 settlements with new farms and businesses, as well as 1,800 new schools. It's lifted family wages and cut the infant death rate.

Bolivia's experience teaches similar lessons. There, a 1952 revolution produced a law intended to grant land titles to the country's majority landless. But with little ongoing mobilization by the country's indigenous people—60 percent of the population—a few thousand large-estate owners became the real winners. A 1990s re-reform brought similarly disappointing results.

Then, in 2000, beginning in the southern department of Tarija, where 80 percent of the peasants have no land at all, the landless took a page from their Brazilian brethren's action strategy. It goes like this: Identify unused arable land—Bolivian law and Brazil's Constitution require arable land to serve a social function—then petition the government for title to it.

Frances Moore Lappé is the author of fifteen books, including, most recently, Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save Our Country by Bringing Our Democracy to Life *(Wiley). See www.smallplanetinstitute.org.*

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If ignored, occupy and start farming. Despite deadly attacks by landowners, the approach has already given rise to more than a hundred MST settlements, many now granted legal title, across Bolivia.

This broad-based landless movement also helped generate the majority that elected Evo Morales president last December. This past June Morales traveled to the fertile eastern lowlands to award peasants title to government land, the first phase of a plan to transfer to the landless over the next five years 77,000 square miles of public land—an area twice the size of Portugal.

Citizens' power is trickier to measure than reducing hunger, but it may well be even more important. When you "forget how to say 'yes, sir' and learn to say 'I think that'"—that is when a "citizen is born," Brazilian MST leader João Pedro Stédile stressed to me; and, "like riding a bike," you don't forget.

The right to eat is a beautiful and simple concept touching our most natural instinct for life in community. But its realization flows from perhaps an even more foundational right—the right to power—which in turn demands a reframing of democracy itself. Much more than a legal structure, democracy vital enough to end hunger is the living practice of citizen power creating strong communities. And it is happening. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
taurants. Francis and Mark, who own the Stage Left and Catherine Lombardi restaurants, host a daily one-hour radio show (available as a podcast) dedicated to "food, wine and the finer things in life." Besides being well versed in all things epicurean, these guys are witty, intelligent and engaging. Topics range from interviews with famous chefs, restaurateurs and sommeliers, to discussions with authors and activists about sustainable agriculture, organics, marketing to children, farm-raised seafood, raw dairy, etc. They'll talk about Häagen-Dazs and White Castle as proficiently as they'll talk about Château d'Yquem and foie gras! They should be applauded not only for their pursuit of quality food and wine but also for maintaining relationships with local purveyors. They champion artisan food and wine and sneer at industrial agriculture, and they do it passionately. KATIE PIZZUTO

Kauai, Hawaii

■ If you are so lucky as to find yourself in downtown Kapaa, Kauai, please visit the 100 percent vegan, certified green, organic oasis of the Pacific: the Blossoming Lotus Restaurant. With menu items like Padma's Living Pad Thai, made with young coconut flesh and fresh, perfectly matched spices, or the Vegan Omelet with Tofu Bacon (a Sunday brunch favorite), you'll wonder if all food isn't supposed to be followed by a euphoric high. Much thanks to the Blossoming Lotus for providing sustenance based on a food philosophy of raising community and consciousness. RANA JACKSON

New York City

■ To be a takeout junkie is a badge of honor in New York, so no garden-variety celebrity chef could inspire such abnormal urban behavior as cooking. Jacques Pépin propels me into the kitchen. It's not just that he makes me a better cook. He makes the least interesting part of any cooking show riveting. While his competitors toss half-full cans and jars out with the flourish of a Swedish muppet, he diligently scrapes mixing bowls clean with a spoonula. To watch him cook is to be reminded of a time when families ate together and nature's whims—not Monsanto's—dictated the availability of ingredients. It takes a master chef to teach the whats and hows. Pépin even tells us why: for pleasure, for friends and family, for the most civilized creative act this side of art and music. MYRA PARK

Baltimore, Md.

■ The Waverly Farmers' Market unites black and white communities in a spirited niche of north Baltimore and lures my girlfriend and me from sleeping in every Saturday morning. We savor Gold Rush and Pink Lady apples in the fall and spring, apricots and white nectarines in the summer. We shell out extra dollars for Zeke's home-roasted coffees, a small price to pay for Chiapas beans, fairly traded and grown in shade. For small change, they'll sell us a sole piece of ginger, a jalapeño pepper, a bulb of garlic. Friends who sleep until noon don't know what they're missing. It's a ritual that frames my weeks, a sign that this weary city is still so relentlessly alive. DANIEL STONE

Eaton, Ohio

■ The Oxford Farmers' Market Uptown encompasses two markets: one on Tuesday afternoons and one on Saturday mornings. I have been deeply involved in the creation of both markets, having been a part of the original groups that created them and also serving as a board member for two years. I have been selling at both markets since their inceptions, and in that time I have built up a very nice customer base that allows me to make my living solely from farming. Farms tend to be remote, the work physically hard and the hours long, so going to the farmers' markets is also how I get to see my friends and hear the local gossip. LUCY GOODMAN

Chicago, Ill.

■ Green City Market in Lincoln Park, Chicago, has great organic vegetables and fruit from farms in the surrounding area whose owners pride themselves on sustainable farming. They have unusual vegetables, like purslane and black Tuscan cabbage; an enormous variety of tomatoes, onions, radishes and lettuce; and the best eggs I have ever eaten. I look forward to it every summer, even though my budget takes a hit. I only wish that those kinds of foods were available to more people. CLARA COEN

Jackson, NJ

■ I suspect that when I die, heaven is going to look a lot like Dean & Deluca. But when I want a taste of paradise in the here and now, I take a trip to the Hong Kong Supermarket in Edison, New Jersey. An emporium of Asian foodstuffs, the Hong Kong Supermarket offers everything from lurid Japanese sweets to complex Thai sauces to delicate Chinese teas. Brought together under the rubric of a pan-Asian regional identity, the Hong Kong Supermarket, part of a national chain, could be critiqued as ignoring differences among nations that have singular and often antagonistic histories. Instead, I see it as demonstrating the complex interplay between the traditional and the postmodern that is the best of our food culture today. As I wander the aisles, blissfully filling my cart, I daydream about the other shoppers: What are they looking for when they come here? And what do they do with their treasures when they get home? MARY RIZZO

Portland, Ore.

■ Hotlips Pizza has been my favorite Portland food institution since 1985, when they opened. The food is delicious, always super-fresh, and most of their ingredients come from local farms. They change their salads and pizzas as the seasons change and make the most unbelievable soda pop from local berries (flavors also change seasonally). The staff drive electric cars for delivery, and just seeing one of those cars with red lips on it lightens my mood. VALERIE DAY

Norfolk, Va.

■ Vegan Action (www.vegan.org) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping animals, the environment and human health by educating the public about the benefits of a vegan lifestyle and encouraging the spread of vegan food options through a number of public outreach campaigns. A vegan ethic and lifestyle is an all-encompassing way to say yes to life and no to cruelty and killing. Vegan Action consciously tries to create a kinder, gentler world for all beings. MARK WIESENFELD

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Eat Drink Man Woman

MATTHEW DEBORD

MY LIFE IN FRANCE.
By Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme.
Knopf. 317 pp. $25.95.

THE NASTY BITS: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones.
By Anthony Bourdain.
Bloomsbury. 288 pp. $24.95.

HEAT: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany.
By Bill Buford.
Knopf. 318 pp. $25.95.

At no point in human history have so many known so much about something that was once considered a dark art practiced by mustachioed tradesmen in funny hats. No, I'm not talking about cowboys. What we're dealing with here is professional cookery, that once-cloistered, near-priestly enterprise that, like so many professions these days—drive-time radio DJ, personal trainer, rebellious skateboarding entrepreneur—has seen its practitioners elevated to the level of rock stars.

Three recent chef-centric books—a tender Francophile memoir, a frisky collection of quick-hit essays and a lengthy exercise in participatory journalism—ascribe a neat arc to the fraught American relationship with food. It's true, we used to be a nation of shoot-it-skin-it-burn-it-eat-it folk. But sometime in the 1950s, we started to get ideas, based largely on the burgeoning postwar travel industry. Suddenly, middle-class rubes who had subsisted on brown bread and chipped beef during the Depression, and on K rations, Hershey's bars and (when in uniform) Lucky Strikes during World War II, discovered haute cuisine.

There are those who would argue that this was when America lost its way. It was a slippery slope from sole meunière to oral sex, marijuana, campus protests, all-night raves and, inevitably, Wolfgang Puck. Certainly, a rightward-leaning Protestant establishment, tossing back a few G&Ts before enjoying a plateful of flavorless slow-stewed chicken, reeled in the face of all that French puffery (forget Italian food, which was the 1952 equivalent of today's Mexican, a subaltern cuisine eaten by a swarthy, sweaty, oversexed breed). And it was decisively French, this initial revolution in American taste. They may have gotten manhandled by the Nazis on the battlefield, but the citizens of Gaul—with their finely calibrated ability to distinguish between subcategories of butter and salt, to turn a snail into something appetizing and to transform goose torture into foie gras in a loving gourmet exercise—came roaring back in the kitchen.

We're no longer a nation of shoot-it-skin-it-burn-it-eat-it folk. Culinary sophistication is as [illegible] as apple pie.

No one symbolized this grand adaptation, this gustatory conquest, more than Julia Child, a tall, brassy Foreign Service wife from Pasadena who'd been raised on a diet of Republicanism and boiled meat. Once Child hit Paris, however... shazam! Her burning bush was the aforementioned sole meunière (tasted almost immediately after she got off the boat in 1948). Henceforth, the stodgy Yankee palate would never be the same. Child spent decades in France soaking up French cooking, and as a result she became an inverted evangelist of digestion: She and her artsy husband, Paul, both OSS veterans from World War II, had headed overseas to sell the Europeans on America. She returned to convince Americans that everything they had been putting in their mouths up to that point had been wrong.

My Life in France (co-written with Alex Prud'homme, Paul's grandnephew) is an enchanting book, a love story on several

Matthew DeBord, a former editor at Wine Spectator, *is the author of* The New York Book of Wine *(Universe) and the forthcoming* Wine Country USA *(Rizzoli).*

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levels. It also tells the tale of how *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, the most important American cookbook ever published, came about. Toward the end, we learn how Julia Child, daughter of a dull California businessman, became Julia Child, the French Chef (*"Bon appétit!"*) of PBS fame, and later *Saturday Night Live* parody ("I've cut the dickens out of my finger!" exclaimed Dan Aykroyd, in Julia drag). But most of all, this is a book about a book.

More accurately, it is a book about a book that probably shouldn't have been a book. The result of a tense collaboration between Child and her French co-authors, "Simca" Beck (later Madame Jean Fischbacher) and Louisette Bertholle (Child would eventually fall out with both women), and with several different publishing houses, *Mastering the Art* has a paradox at its heart. It was supposed to be a cookbook written with the American housewife in mind. What Child et al. finally delivered to Houghton Mifflin, however, was affectionately described by Child as "our poor Gargantua," a 700-page tome that would certainly have flummoxed the average American wife (with the possible exception of Martha Stewart, who reportedly cooked every recipe in the edition that Knopf ultimately published in 1961). *My Life in France* tells the saga of the writing of *Mastering the Art*, alongside the carefree tale of Julia and Paul's expat boho sojourn through postwar Europe. The juxtaposition reveals the secret of Child's success: her monumental naïveté. In a sense, right up to her death in 2004, she remained appealingly childlike; she never grew tired of her adult playmate, French cuisine, even when the translation of it for an American audience turned into a monumental pain in the ass. This is never less than charming, if occasionally irritating. It's also melancholy, because reading *My Life in France* reveals how far our attitude toward fine food has drifted from the mother country.

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Child was always something of a food wrangler. Her overall approach was anything but dainty. However, she understood that cooking French meant paying attention to detail. If the classic French kitchen—feminine, elegant, tender—that she so affectionately translated for American consumption is a version of heaven, then the professional boiler rooms that feature in the works of Anthony Bourdain, and now Bill Buford, are hell. This is a significant shift. Prior to the advent of the TV Food Network, *Iron Chef* and the hyper-competitive big-city restaurant scene, American cooking didactics were viewed as having two trajectories: unassuming ladies fussing over the flakiness of their pie crusts and that greaseball in the hairnet who whipped up your bacon-cheese omelet. In other words, cooking was not a contact sport, much less rock and roll, as it is today. It was the province of the spinsterly and the otherwise unemployable.

The transformation has been remarkable. My grandfather, an Army cook, disliked Julia Child. His was a culture of mashed potatoes in vats, not delicately sliced vegetables. His was the old school—of America, not France. Of course, after a brief period of exile during which society was widely feminized by, among other things, Child's TV show *The French Chef* and its image of cooking as something gentle, slow, perfectly domestic, the old-school approach staged a comeback in the mid-'90s. By the time Bourdain and Buford hit the field of play, the hard-core realm of the masculine professional kitchen was where the action was. Forget serving your family a maternally roasted platter of spring lamb. In the early twenty-first century, professional cooking is presented to the public as the highest expression of foodie ambition, and it is hand-to-hand combat against coarse, unyielding foodstuffs—shanks and hocks and slabs of lard and beef—conducted by scarred, brutal men in the brimstone regions of expensive New York restaurants, in stainless-steel purgatories filled with fire and knives.

This brutal realm is now well-known to Americans, through Bourdain and his bestselling *Kitchen Confidential*. His latest, *The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones*, is what it says it is, a gathering of essays published in a gaggle of American and British magazines. Familiar Tony is at the helm, sustaining his reputation as the Iggy Pop of the professional kitchen. He would be boring by now if he weren't such a thoroughgoing romantic, always ready to fall in love again with food both high and low, from the futuristic concoctions of Spanish avant-garde chef Ferran Adrià to the off-road eel shops of Hanoi. He's repetitive, but he has soul. For example, he's emphatic about who does, and who should do, most of the cooking in big-time restaurants: Latinos. It shapes his take on the recent immigration debate: "We need *more* Latinos to come here. And they should, whenever possible, impregnate our women."

Bourdain caused a paradigm shift with *Kitchen Confidential*. Before the article that would become the book was published in *The New Yorker*, diners still viewed the restaurant kitchen as off-limits. But in the same way that Watergate taught us to distrust government, Bourdain taught us that the professional kitchen is not a gentle place of bubbling stocks and vegetables quietly diced. It's more like prison, full of swagger and dysfunction and violence. (George Orwell very nicely mapped out the grunge and the grind in his 1933 roman à clef *Down and Out in Paris and London*.) You'd have to be totally nuts to want to work there.

But increasingly, people do. Either they install a professional kitchen at home, or they take sabbaticals from dreary corporate law to become novitiates in the restaurant trade. They're not happy cooking at home, according to the Rules of Julia. They want to try their hand at the real thing. I've never understood this. Like cliff diving, professional cooking seems like a

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game for the young. Why else would you subject yourself to a nightly roasting in a demeaning environment, for no money, if you were not a young person who could close out the night after a shift at some nocturnal chefs' hangout, drinking hard, boasting harder, singing ribald chef songs and perhaps worse? Success, improbable as it is, brings the promise of immediate escape from this life of penal servitude. Bourdain details the reality of the celebrity chef, which by and large involves no cooking whatsoever. Once you get rich off this cruel occupation, why would you ever want to step back in front of the stove?

For the buzz—the degenerate, adrenaline-fueled buzz (it's no accident that Bourdain once endured a bout of heroin addiction). Bill Buford gave in to the siren call of the sous-chef when he decided to quit his job as fiction editor at *The New Yorker* and place himself under the tutelage of New York's most celebrated celebrity chef, Mario Batali. "That's what I wanted to do," he writes, "to work in the Babbo kitchen, as Mario's slave." In *Heat*, which grew out of a *New Yorker* profile that Buford claims he couldn't get anyone other than himself to write, a lot of ground is covered. But on page after page, Buford's midlife apprenticeship in the kitchen at Batali's flagship feels like a gigantic bait-and-switch operation. Ideally, *Heat* would have been subtitled "Mastering the Art of Mario Batali," but in the end what we mostly get is the bumbling of Bill. "Molto Mario" of Food Network fame is glimpsed only intermittently; what we learn is that he's one savvy businessman, a world-class cheapskate (he scavenges scraps from Babbo's trash and excoriates the kitchen crew for wasting the opportunity to transform garbage into gourmet cuisine, notching profits) and a heroic drinker.

Buford, meanwhile, takes an inordinately long time rising to the level of flunky, much less slave, which would imply that Batali was actually interested in what Buford was doing (it's never entirely clear that he was). Top props for Buford eventually come not from Batali, who evidently missed that this book might be good PR, but from a surrogate Babbo slavemaster, Frankie (one of many minor characters who come to dominate *Heat*). "You did good," Frankie tells him after a rough night at the grill station. "You saved our ass."

As many amateur cooks and Batali partisans know, Mario hates classic French cuisine. This former pizza cook from Seattle experienced his own version of Julia Child's Gallic epiphany when, after achieving some moderate early success, he decided to bag it all and immerse himself in Italian country cooking, specifically in the Emilia-Romagna region. He returned to New York several years later and opened Po, the ultra-authentic Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village that, to borrow a *Kitchen Confidential* phrase from Bourdain, enabled Batali to "make his bones." From this modest platform, he launched the full-scale shift in big-city American restaurant culture away from its French roots. As the Batali empire grew (he now operates seven restaurants in New York with his partner, Joe Bastianich, and there's talk of one opening in Los Angeles), the era of the French culinary temple faded. Since Babbo opened, La Côte Basque, La Caravelle and Lutèce have all closed. We don't want our restaurant food to represent the culmination of a century of French innovation. Instead, we want simple, sustaining peasant chow, served in casual surroundings. Of course, the qualitative difference between a dazzling restaurant such as Le Bernardin (still open) and a more populist establishment like Babbo is indisputable. But nobody wants to become a slave to Le Bernardin's head chef, Eric Ripert. Ruddy, roly-poly, rock-and-roll Mario is more like it.

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This doesn't make life in Batali's kitchen any easier. So, after putting in his time at Babbo, Buford shifts gears and pulls a Mario of his own, leaving New York to learn traditional butchery in Tuscany at the feet of the man many consider the greatest meat guy in the world, Dario Cecchini. Buford had already visited the mother country to learn the arts of pasta making, but it's only when he trades carbohydrates for raw flesh that things really get going. Recommended to Buford by Batali's father, Armandino, Cecchini is from a family that has been in the meat business for centuries. He is a butcher's butcher. "I want only bistecca, dripping with blood," he says at a representative moment, when he and Buford go out for a late meal. "A butcher likes raw.... A butcher likes the warm tissue of an animal freshly killed, tasting only of blood." Cecchini's creed of the butcher then extends to an unsurprising realm. "You are now a member of the carnal confederation of butchers," he tells Buford. "You must now make love like a butcher."

Yeah, baby! How could Buford, whose last book, *Among the Thugs*, was about English football hooligans, not be seduced? And it just gets better. Cecchini is a Tuscan absolutist, determined to insure that the region's old ways are not lost. In *Heat* this attitude is observed with the proper mix of admiration and fear. At times, Cecchini seems very nearly insane (he is at least prone to deep depressions). "A butcher never sleeps," he insists. "A butcher works in meat during the day and plays in flesh at night. A true butcher is a disciple of carnality."

A true butcher is also highly quotable, even when he isn't reciting Dante. But this is a lot of book to wait for Buford to finally get revved up. He finds his stride, however, with Cecchini and the discipline of carnality. The awkward year in the Babbo kitchen fades, replaced by scenes of Buford, one-on-one with an entire pig, hacking it up serial-killer style in his New York apartment, or bonding, Grasshopper-like, with Cecchini's most skillful associate, known as the Maestro, as he teaches Buford the ancient jujitsu of the true Tuscan butcher. "In the Maestro, I found a tranquility I hadn't witnessed before: a patience, a sense of order, a stable relationship to a world that was old and trustworthy." In other words, the antithesis of a frantic New York City restaurant kitchen—or perhaps office life at *The New Yorker*.

It doesn't last. In a denouement with Batali, Buford confesses that his curiosity is far from satisfied. I'm not sure this is good news, but he sets us up for a sequel. First Mario and the Maestro; next... well, I was surprised, too. Buford will be walking in the steps of Julia. He's headed for France. ■

A Sort of Homecoming

HAZEL ROWLEY

MIDDLE PASSAGES: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005.
By James T. Campbell. Penguin. 513 pp. $29.95.

AMERICAN AFRICANS IN GHANA: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era.
By Kevin K. Gaines. North Carolina. 342 pp. $34.95.

BLACK GOLD OF THE SUN: Searching for Home in Africa and Beyond.
By Ekow Eshun. Pantheon. 229 pp. $23.

At least 12 million people from Africa were loaded into slave ships and transported to the Americas. How do people of African descent, scattered around the world, see their relationship to their ancestral home? Do they consider themselves "the African diaspora"? If their African heritage dates back several generations, is it "nebulous atavistic yearnings," as the Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen once said, to search for their roots, to want some kind of bond with their ancestral homeland? Or is it important, in a neocolonial and still-racist world, that Africans and people of African descent see themselves as part of a transnational community? After all, the ancestors in question did not choose to leave their homeland; they arrived in the Americas in chains, and from the time they landed they were divided and dispersed, as a strategy of domination. And

Hazel Rowley is the author of Richard Wright: The Life and Times *and, most recently,* Tête-a-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre.

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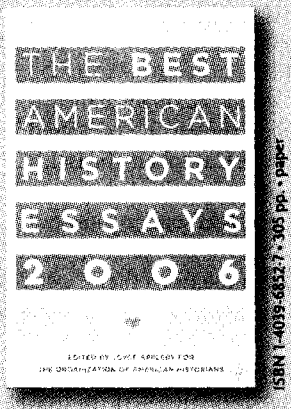

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even though slavery has ended, people of African descent still wear its imprint on their skin, like a tattoo. Out of slavery came an ideology of racism that permeates the Western world to this day. Given the black collective memory of slavery, it is easy to understand the emotional tug of the ancestral land, the longing for Pan-African brotherhood and the desire for a community that is not racist. The trouble is, as these three books all show, Afro-diasporic solidarity is complex, and often fraught.

In *Middle Passages* James T. Campbell (not to be confused with James Campbell, the Baldwin biographer) looks at various African-American journeys to Africa over the past two centuries. What did Africa mean to them? asks Campbell. What did America mean to them? In the past, the number of African-Americans traveling to Africa remained small. Since the growth of the African tourist industry in the 1990s, tens of thousands of African-American tourists have made pilgrimages there each year, and it often proves a charged emotional experience.

The first story in the book, an astonishing tale of dramatic reversals of fortune worthy of a Grimm fairy tale, reminds us just how ruthless was this trade in "black gold." In 1730 Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, a highborn Muslim man in West Africa, made a 200-mile trek to a place on the Gambia River where an English ship was anchored. He had slaves to sell, but the English captain was not prepared to pay enough, and Ayuba continued south into Mandinke territory. He exchanged his slaves for cattle and set off for home, unaware that he was being followed. He was waylaid. His captors shaved his head and beard. Back at the English ship on the Gambia, the English captain recognized him but apparently had no qualms about loading him on board as part of his human cargo. Ayuba would find himself working on a tobacco plantation in Maryland. And then came another dramatic reversal of fortune: His noble birth was discovered, and he was put on a ship to England, where he was adopted by the English gentry and met the royal family. After a year there, he boarded another slave ship, this time as a passenger, back to Africa. He spent the rest of his days working for the Royal Africa Company and facilitating the slave trade. "Viewed through the moral lenses of our own time, Ayuba seems guilty of the most appalling hypocrisy," writes Campbell, "but he would not have seemed so to contemporaries."

Langston Hughes was 21 in the summer of 1923, when he boarded a ship in the Brooklyn dockyards heading for West Africa. The 1920s was the Jazz Age, and the time of the black arts movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. As Hughes puts it, "The Negro was in vogue." Caught up in the neo-Romantic "primitivism" was a new fascination with Africa, its tom-tom exoticism, its black vitality. Hughes was as prone to employ these stereotypes as everyone else; the difference was that he was one of the few who actually made the voyage to Africa. Eager to escape the humiliation of racism in America, he hoped to find a truer, freer self in the home of his ancestors. His first sight of the coastline filled him with excitement: "My Africa, Motherland of the Negro peoples!" He would respond viscerally to the beauty of the landscape and the people, but he left Africa feeling rebuffed. Africans treated him like a white man. Years later, in his memoir *The Big Sea*, he would mock his naïve hopes and illusions.

Richard Wright's experiences in Africa, where his 'blood brothers' saw him as an American, left him with a painful sense of estrangement.

It is sometimes surprising to see who clings most to the African mystique. W.E.B. Du Bois grew up in New England. At school he was never taught a thing about African history. It was not until he went to Fisk University that he developed an interest in Africa, and in 1907 he embarked on what would become a lifelong project, an Encyclopedia Africana. As Campbell writes, Du Bois was "a twentieth-century social scientist, determined to rescue Africa from the fog of mythology and misprision that had long enveloped it." In 1923 he set off for Liberia, an African-American colony established on the coast of West Africa a century earlier. (In the nineteenth century, Liberia was the most common destination for African-Americans traveling to Africa.) "The spell of Africa is upon me," Du Bois wrote in his journal. "The ancient witchery of her medicine is burning my drowsy, dreamy blood.... It is a great black bosom where the Spirit longs to die."

Campbell is hard on Du Bois's "romantic effusions." How could Du Bois remain silent about what was actually going on in Liberia? Wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a small Americo-Liberian settler elite, who lived off a labor force made up of indigenous people who were treated like slaves. The frequent popular uprisings were brutally suppressed, with the support of the US government.

Richard Wright was another who had no time for Du Bois's romance with Africa; Wright vowed that he would tell the truth, however difficult and painful. When he traveled in 1953 to what was then "the Gold Coast," he felt "a vague sense of disquiet." It was an exciting time to be going there—the Gold Coast was about to throw off the chains of British colonialism—but Wright, like many African-Americans before and after him, was there partly on a personal quest. His ancestors had come from Africa; his grandparents, all four of them, had been slaves. He had been born "free," though it was not clear what that amounted to in Mississippi, the most impoverished and lynch-prone state in the segregated Deep South. The freedom to flee? At the age of 17 he had fled to the North, and twenty years later he had sailed out of New York Harbor ("I felt relieved when my ship sailed past the Statue of Liberty") to France. Now he was pinning his hopes on black brotherhood. On board the Accra, from Liverpool to Takoradi, he sat at his typewriter, preparing a statement for the African press. "I am one of the lost sons of Mother Africa. There is something in me that never left this land.... I pray that you will respond to me as one of your blood brothers."

They did not. Africans saw him as an American. The Western-educated elite did not give a damn that he was in their country. As for the Africans he met as he traveled around, Wright found himself at a complete loss. They stared at him and giggled. They evaded his questions. Even their laughter, he felt, was an evasive tactic. He was shocked that people urinated openly, in public. He was (unlike Du Bois) repelled by the women's naked breasts. The poverty distressed him, and he blamed the heinous crime of European colonialism. But he also decided that these people, with their superstitions and ancestor worship (he described these as "rot" and "mush"), did not know how to help themselves. Soon he was writing in his journal: "Africa! Where are you? Are you a myth?... I'm in despair. I find myself longing to take a ship and go home." The book that resulted from the trip, which, ironically enough, is titled *Black Power*, is honest, almost painfully so, about Wright's complete sense of estrangement.

Campbell's narrative is beautifully told and dense with detail. It is also singularly devoid of heroes, owing to the complex burdens of race. In this tangle of myths, contradictions and paradoxes, a visiting African-American is lucky to come away

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with his sanity intact. What place is there for heroes?

As Kevin Gaines points out in *American Africans in Ghana*, no one talks about "Pan-Africanism" anymore, though in the first half of the twentieth century black radicals eagerly embraced the concept. It was Du Bois who convened the first Pan-African Congress in 1919, with the aim of strengthening the unity and solidarity of African peoples worldwide. Paul Robeson would also espouse this anti-imperialist vision. Needless to say, the US government was highly suspicious of American blacks who showed solidarity with African people and their struggles for independence; it was viewed as disloyal, a betrayal of their essential Americanism.

When Kwame Nkrumah became prime minister of the independent nation of Ghana in March 1957, it was an exhilarating moment for Africans and African-Americans alike. (Contrary to popular belief, Ghana was not the first African nation to become independent; that honor belonged to Sudan, in 1956.) Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta King attended the independence celebrations in Accra, along with fellow African-American leaders Adam Clayton Powell, A. Philip Randolph and Ralph Bunche. King, like Nkrumah, wept with emotion as the Ghanaian flag went up and shouts of "freedom!" filled the air. Nkrumah hailed the emergence of a new "African personality," a black subject who would finally be free, and he encouraged black people from outside Africa to come to Ghana and help make the Pan-African dream come true. During the next nine years, some 300 African-American expatriates went to live in Ghana.

The oldest and most prestigious member of the African-American community in Accra was Du Bois. Throughout the Red Scare McCarthy years, he had been relentlessly hounded and his passport had been confiscated. The US State Department had prevented him from attending Ghana's independence ceremony. When his passport was finally restored to him, he was not going to wait around for it to be seized again. On the day he left the United States, as a final defiant gesture to his homeland, Du Bois joined the American Communist Party. Then he and his wife, Shirley Graham, went to live in Ghana. It was 1960. Du Bois was 93 years old.

African-Americans went to Ghana with a dream, but as Gaines explains, their situation was "fraught with ambiguities." They were of African descent, but they were not

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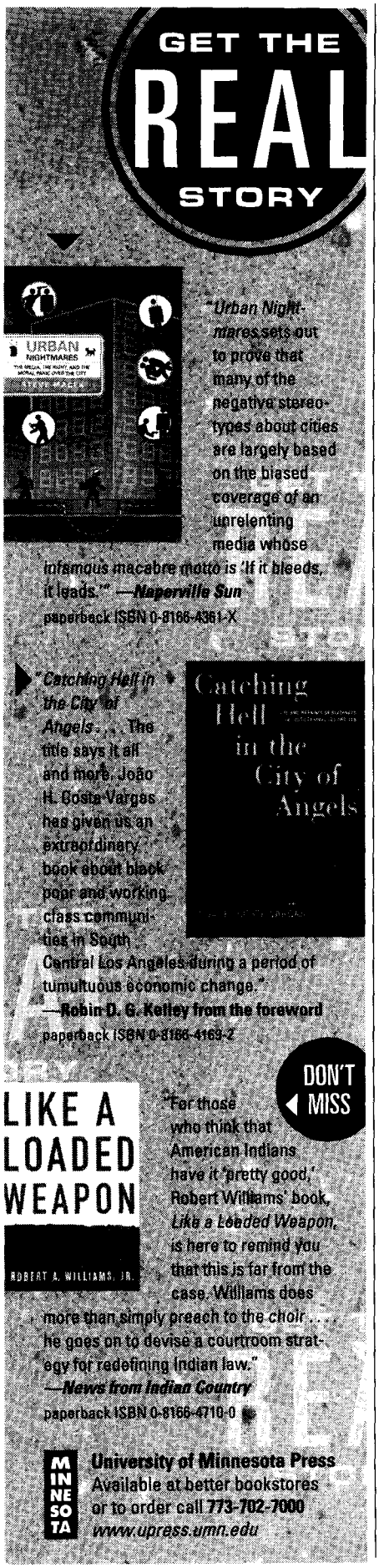
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African. Their culture was different; even their race consciousness was different. (The Americans were generally more sensitive to white racism.) Ghana might have been trying to be a revolutionary society, but African-American women were often rebuffed by Ghanaian men, who found them too outspoken and independent. Most African-Americans were there because of their admiration for Nkrumah, yet it soon became obvious to them that Nkrumah's government was beset by bribery, corruption and the blatant abuse of power by those they called the "big men." When the Kings visited Ghana, they were dismayed by the submissiveness of the servants who worked for their hosts.

But it was in 1962, when Nkrumah narrowly escaped assassination, that things turned sour. Nkrumah was convinced the CIA was behind the plot against him. The Ghanaian press became obsessed with American espionage. As Nkrumah's government became more and more besieged, by Western forces and by enemies within, there were whispers, accusations and rumors about certain black Americans who worked for American intelligence. Africans no longer trusted the expatriate community.

And then, in February 1966, came the coup. Nkrumah was visiting Beijing, and his absence gave his enemies the chance they had been waiting for. The military men struck before dawn. There were around 200 deaths; anyone close to Nkrumah was arrested or detained. The African-American expatriate community broke up, with most returning, badly disillusioned, to the United States.

Kevin Gaines has written an excellent and important book; my only complaint is the frequent use of academic jargon, which lessens the pleasure of reading it. On one page I looped five "articulates" or "articulations." Why do editors not do their job?

It has become a genre of its own: the narrative in which a person of African descent brought up in America, Europe or the Caribbean meditates on travel, migration and exile, and grapples with his or her mixed feelings about Africa. Ekow Eshun's *Black Gold of the Sun* was written half a century after Wright traveled to the Gold Coast. Born in London to Ghanaian parents in 1968 (two years after the army coup that overthrew Nkrumah and the Pan-African dream), Eshun flew to Ghana in 2002. He had no illusions about Pan-African unity. Indeed, after four more coups in Ghana and a number of unsuccessful attempts, he had no illusions at all about Ghanaian politics. His pilgrimage had to do with his fragile sense of identity. He was tired of being a black man in Britain. "I'd felt like an outsider there all my life." He did not expect Ghana to feel like "home," but he hoped he could "feel *at* home there," he writes. "All I knew was that if Ghana didn't live up to my hopes I'd have nothing left to hold on to."

Surely, we might think, Eshun's experience of the ancestral homeland was going to be very different from the African-American experience. In his childhood, his parents brought Africa into the family home: They spoke Fante (one of the seventy-five languages in Ghana); they ate African food; when they had parties, their guests arrived in Kente cloth robes. In the early 1970s, the family had moved back to Ghana for three years. In England, Eshun tried to make British friends by never talking about anything that made him different:

> "Where you from, man?"
> "London."
> "Cool."
> "You heard the new Public Enemy album?"

In the 1980s, when he was in his teens, Eshun was bemused by the fashionable new black consciousness in Britain. A black culture, largely imported from the United States—black TV sitcoms, Spike Lee films and rap music—gave blacks in Britain a level of popular respect they had never had before. The left-wing bookshops of Hackney were suddenly selling African pendants and statues of Nefertiti. For his part, Eshun was determined not to mystify an ancestral homeland that he knew was beset by political upheavals and the contradictions of neocolonialism.

He went to Ghana with a mental image frozen in the early 1970s, and found Accra full of SUVs, mobile phones and blaring hip-hop music. When he and his cousin went to a discothèque one night, Eshun was taken aback by the sleek young couples who emerged from Mercedes sports coupes carrying brand-name sunglasses and handbags. In restaurants, he winced at the way the "big men" barked orders and snapped their fingers for service, and the subservience of the waiters made him cringe. On his walks around the city, he noticed that people fell silent as he passed. In an inland village, a friend pointed out that everyone was talking about him; they took him for a black American with too much money. Leaving Kumasi on a bus, Eshun was disconcerted by the slogan on the seat in front of him: WE'LL GET YOU THERE

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ALIVE. Tied to the roof of the bus were a flock of goats that screamed throughout the journey, while the bus driver turned up his radio. At sunset every day, Eshun was attacked by clouds of savage mosquitoes.

In a secondhand bookstall in Kumasi, he came across *Black Power*. "Given the confusions of my own trip I had nothing but sympathy for Wright," he observes. After a month traveling around, Eshun had the same reaction as Wright: "I couldn't wait to leave."

What is this torment all about? Why does Eshun feel much the same alienation as an African-American man whose roots are far more distant from his ancestral land? It is clearly not about the country they are traveling through; it is about lost identity, feelings of exile, dashed expectations of solidarity. They were not white; the world had made that clear to them every day of their lives. In which case, they wanted to know, what does it mean to be black? In Ghana, Eshun learned for the first time that he had a Dutch ancestor who was a slave trader. The man married a chief's daughter, and their son, Joseph, a light-skinned mulatto, would also become a Cape Coast slave trader.

> You imagine that the events of history take place in some nebulous "other time" unrelated to your own life. Yet I feel the consequences of Joseph's actions every day in Britain. It was partly because of the pervasiveness of racism there that I'd come to Ghana—only to find my ancestor had collaborated in establishing its tenets.... The shock is physical. You feel winded. The sun is too bright. Your head aches. You find yourself walking along a sand-blown highway no longer sure who you are any more.

Black Gold of the Sun is a beautifully written book, rich with colorful vignettes and astute observations. Its probing, courageous honesty reminded me of Richard Wright. Fifty years apart, both men engage in some very anguished soul-searching. Eshun is a modern, more sophisticated man, and readers will no doubt be less unsettled by his conclusions. When Wright found himself disgusted by African behavior, he resorted to somewhat racist generalizations about the "African personality." Eshun asks himself an important question that Wright does not ask: "Europe looked down on Africa. Maybe I'd been doing the same thing?... Does living in a white country make you, in some way, white?"

What does it mean to be white? It's time that white people asked themselves the sorts of questions with which people of African

The Ending of War

When the time comes to count the cost, men* will be amazed at, and ashamed of, the waste of war. More than any other activity of men, war eats greedily into resources and lives. Nothing is spared in the effort to overcome the enemy; everything is sacrificed to the attainment of victory. Thus has man waged relentless strife against his neighbour, and not always in self-defence. As often as not, war has been used for the expansion of territory, the accumulation of plunder or, most abhorrently, the capture of slaves.

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Then will you see the flowering of the human spirit in brotherhood and cooperation. Then will the problems and blockages melt away, overcome in overflowing goodwill.

Thus will it be, and thus shall we witness the end of the abomination of war. Such is Maitreya s purpose and firm is His will for its accomplishment.

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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descent have wrestled for centuries. Eshun seems to be referring to that righteous complacency and sense of superiority one witnesses every day in the modern world—from the conduct of foreign policy to daily interactions between nonwhites and whites. I can't help thinking that if we all tormented ourselves with these sorts of questions, the world might be less ignorant, less polarized, less hateful, less bellicose. ■

FILMS

Virtual Catastrophe

STUART KLAWANS

WORLD TRADE CENTER

Smoke was still rising from the mass grave of Lower Manhattan when Oliver Stone, sitting onstage at New York's Alice Tully Hall, dignified the attack on the Twin Towers as "the revolt." I was in the audience on that October morning and observed how he took a calculated pause, to signal the thoughtfulness of his words. You'd have thought he was History's own delegate to the panel discussion, sent to remind us that a line divides the oppressors from the oppressed, and that the corpses at the World Trade Center had fallen on the wrong side of it. I saw the satisfaction on Stone's face as he made this judgment, the mingling of piety and callousness.

Years later, when the producers of *World Trade Center* hired Stone to direct, I said to myself, "Interesting choice."

My thoughts then went back to one of the fundamental texts of film criticism, François Truffaut's essay "A Certain Tendency of French Cinema," and its denunciation of the screenwriters Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost. Though known to be anticlerical, these writers had agreed to adapt the novel *Diary of a Country Priest* and so figured in the essay as exemplars of bad faith—not so much toward the Catholic Church (which Truffaut admitted he didn't care about) as toward the movies. Having tossed off something that the public presumably wanted, Aurenche and Bost showed their contempt for the job by working in a few covert sneers at the story, and at the people who might watch it.

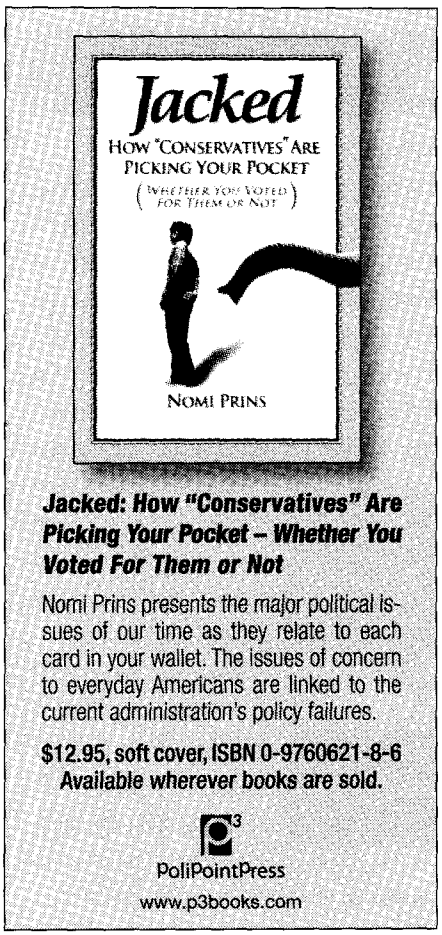
Would Stone do something similar with *World Trade Center*? His power of self-expression, I knew, would be constrained by someone else's screenplay (the writer is Andrea Berloff) and by the producers' circumspection. But even the humblest director has room to maneuver, I thought as I presented myself at the theater. As soon as I'd read the opening title, I felt I'd detected Stone's hand.

"These events are based on the actual accounts of the surviving participants." There's no telling for sure who wrote those words, but they strike me as characteristic of Stone, in being windy ("Based on a true story" would have done) and confused. I'd have thought the survivors' experiences were the "events" and the movie about them the "account." But to the author of these lines, the movie evidently is the reality.

I might interpret this claim as a mere artifact of careless writing if not for a similarly befuddling title at the end. After listing the Port Authority police officers who died in the September 11 attacks, this closing text dedicates *World Trade Center* to them, and to "all those who fought, died and were wounded that day."

What does "fought" mean? Does it incorporate into the dedication Mohamed Atta and his fellow killers—the perpetrators of Stone's "revolt"? (They were, after all, the only people who could be said to have battled at the World Trade Center.) Does it retroactively throw Stone's mantle over the passengers of United Flight 93, who have served as heroes for other filmmakers? Or does the word "fought" testify to a desire to transform the actual heroes of Stone's film—rescue workers—into warriors, just as the narration of this event is magically changed into the real thing?

I think the answer may be found in the strange characterization of one figure, on whom the entire picture hinges. Before this man goes into action, *World Trade Center* is the story of immobilized victims: Port Authority police officers John McLoughlin and William Jimeno (Nicolas Cage and Michael Peña), trapped in the rubble of Ground Zero, and their wives, Donna and Allison (Maria Bello and Mag-



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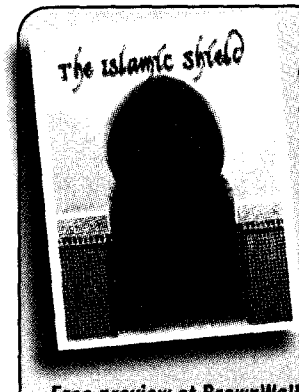

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gie Gyllenhaal), trapped at home in helpless fear. After this character steps in, *World Trade Center* becomes a story of heroes, working to rescue McLoughlin and Jimeno and reunite them with their families. The figure who effects this shift in the narrative is Dave Karnes (Michael Shannon), a former Marine who in real life—this is true—left his office in Connecticut, put on his old fatigues, drove to New York and walked on his own authority onto Ground Zero, where he searched into the night for buried survivors and eventually located McLoughlin and Jimeno.

Certain bits of information about Karnes were available to the filmmakers. They knew, for example, that upon seeing a news report about the September 11 attacks, he declared to his office-mates that America was at war. Before setting off for Ground Zero, he sought out his pastor for a blessing; afterward, he re-enlisted in the Marines and served two tours of duty, which took him to Iraq. But it's one thing to know these disparate facts and another to decide how to use them to elicit meaning and a feeling for a man. Various directors might have shaped them any number of ways. Stone does it by flashing before you enormous, stark, repeated images of an altar cross, and by having his actor maintain a 200-yard stare.

Compare this stylized characterization with Stone's portrayals of McLoughlin and Jimeno, who converse naturalistically, pray informally and are even capable of seeing a whimsical vision of Jesus. The victims come across as fully human, whereas their rescuer conveys the grim single-mindedness of an android in a *Terminator* movie—or maybe of Sergeant Barnes, the killing machine in Stone's *Platoon*.

A fact-based movie might have retained the transition from victimization to heroism, from burial to resurrection, while treating Karnes differently. It might even have used a different character to bring about the change. As Rebecca Liss has reported in *Slate*, a volunteer named Chuck Sereika took a far bigger risk at Ground Zero than Karnes, crawling down into the teetering rubble to help dig out McLoughlin and Jimeno. This episode, too, has become a part of the movie, with Frank Whaley taking the role of Sereika. But even though Sereika could offer a redemption narrative of his own—on September 11, he was a recovering addict with a lapsed paramedic's license—the self-doubting hard-luck guy remains an incidental character in *World Trade Center*. The movie pivots instead on the tough guy in fatigues—the rescuer as warrior—who declares, at the end, "We're gonna need some good men out there to avenge this."

Because Karnes functions in the picture as the indispensable man, without whose martial spirit the cops would have died, *World Trade Center* leads inexorably to his demand for reprisal, if not against Al Qaeda (which is not named in the film) then against Iraq (which is). In the movies, momentum is destiny; and so, by its very structure, *World Trade Center* endorses Karnes's call for revenge. The producers seem to assume this is what the American public wants to hear; and Stone, as contract director, has agreed to sound the cry, much as Aurenche and Bost were willing to provide their audience with a story about a priest. But at the same time, through his characterization of Karnes, Stone deliberately strikes a series of wrong notes—like the clunkers that Aurenche and Bost tossed into *Diary of a Country Priest*—so that he sours the demand for an all-out "war on terror."

Some fans of *World Trade Center* might interpret this dissonance as ambiguity or nuance. But since the merest traces of these elements have been detected in Stone's previous films, I think the characterization of Karnes (which even supporters of the film have found weird) is more a matter of the director's attempt to have things both ways, or of practicing what Truffaut called "the art of putting one over." I'm not surprised that the right-wing blowhards who admire the film—Cal Thomas, for example—have been oblivious to the effect. What's astonishing is that so many others have accepted the pretense that the film is nonpolitical. The consensus, as of this writing, is that *World Trade Center* avoids big issues (as if that would be possible) and focuses instead on an intimate human drama.

Yet the intimate scenes are consistently the least dramatic. You may excuse, though you probably will not believe, the pastel-tinged, softly focused images of domestic bliss between John and Donna, William and Allison—happy pictures of home carpentry and impending childbirth—since these Kodak moments are supposed to be memories, called up by the day's duress. When I'm in a bad spot and fear the worst, my memories of loved ones are more likely to be captioned: "God forgive me, why did I do that?" But, all right, let's allow the McLoughlins and Jimenos to think sweetly of one another on the screen, having suffered so horribly in reality. The question then is how effectively *World Trade Center* portrays that suffering.

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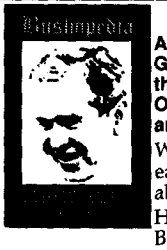

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $200 for 50 words; $250 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

Not so well. Scenes of the wives' endless, dreadful waiting are invariably arranged to point up a single facet of their characters: Donna copes stoically, whereas Allison is ready to erupt. The frame is crowded, with friends and family bustling around each wife; but despite the directorial busyness, actions are always conventional—now someone is snapped at, now someone is hugged—and the dramaturgy static. These scenes have nowhere to go.

Nor are the husbands going anywhere. Once the cops are trapped, Cage and Peña must act from the neck up, whispering and croaking and letting out the intermittent bellow. I cannot imagine any two actors doing more with these scenes. (Nor could other actresses outdo Bello and Gyllenhaal with the material they've been given.) But except for that one loopy vision of Jesus, the incidents with McLoughlin and Jimeno are empty of specificity or surprise. "Stay with me." "Don't fall asleep." "Hey, you remember that movie—" You feel shock and fear whenever there's another boom, followed by a fresh ton of downpouring concrete; but then, you may feel as much for the trapped spelunkers in Neil Marshall's horror movie *The Descent*.

So if the human part of this intimate human drama is banal, to what are its fans responding? The part that's not intimate. When vehicles stuffed with bulky men careen through the streets, when crowds roil in panic or rescuers shape themselves into a chain, when the characters and camera knock around inside a great sphere of chaos through which disaster may break at any point, then Stone is one of the most compelling filmmakers. He convinces you, as few others could have done, that this was the reality at Ground Zero.

That, I believe, is the larger reason why people ignore the obvious shortcomings of *World Trade Center*. For the millions of us who did not suffer directly on September 11, Stone's film provides a way to be imaginatively present. It transfers our experience of helplessness onto McLoughlin and Jimeno and then absolves us for having survived, since they did, too. It works this magic, at any rate, for viewers who don't tote up the cost paid in artistic bad faith and political fudging. To sit before the film is to participate in a ritual of solidarity and redemption, to which the flimsiness of two-thirds of the movie is irrelevant. In that sense, the opening text is entirely appropriate. Interpret "these events" to mean "screenings of *World Trade Center*," and they are indeed reality, not representation.

They also serve, of course, to redeem Oliver Stone. ■

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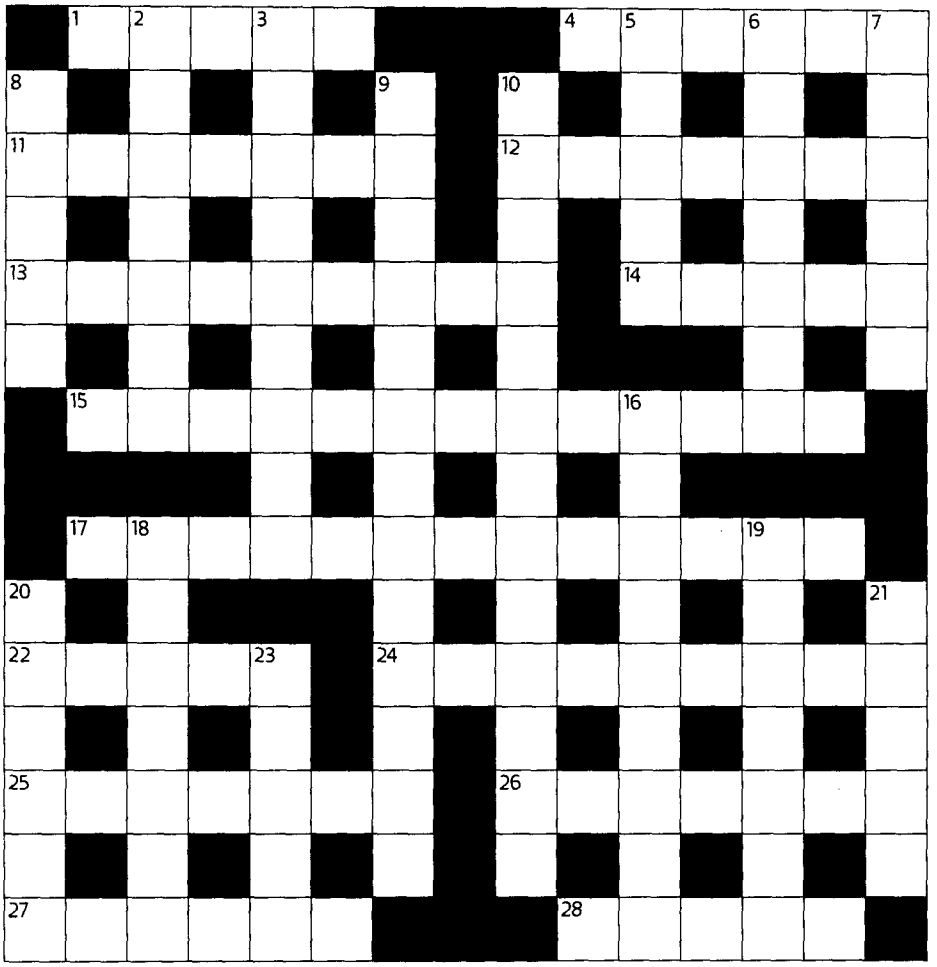

ACROSS

1 Like the Big Bad Wolf at one time, acting a little put out. (5)

4 Kaye's manipulator of an ill wind? (6)

11 The marrow of the bones makes this person uninteresting to a conclusion. (7)

12 Grant's first novel, for which Joyce is responsible. (7)

13 A bow might be made with this, having to start a tune on a foreign shore. (9)

14 According to the edict, England and its belongings are on a rough sea. (5)

15 Things that crawl along can go to Hades, describing many spectacles. (8-5)

16 Musical about a tea in Paris, with Ma's companion having a spread with a foreign potentate and me. (3,6,4)

22 What some things are passing through when in bad shape. (5)

24 It's not good cheer some associate with the Bronx! (In good taste, however.) (9)

25 International body on the wild shore has a way to pull one from the saddle. (7)

26 Finger-shaped things the European Community shows in place of wild animals. (7)

27 Info (as some say) on an effort to play up the landed types? (6)

28 Taking advantage of you and me, ending up with a gin sling. (5)

DOWN

2 Where the stop sign is never placed shows what we have to do when in trouble. (7)

3 Pets, perhaps, taken when we go on the wrong foot. (5,4)

5 To a degree, the second person that shows what some southern states are happy to have. (5)

6 This month, in short, gets everything to put into operation where we might find a bossy representative. (7)

7 Incorrectly stated to be freely sampled. (6)

8 Where they left Ma and Pa in the old song, in favor of Kansas City. (5)

9 Evidently someone like Gore has put on weight, in groups of twelve or so people—which can prove deadly. (5,8)

10 A two-bit boss—or just one that hands out the equipment? (13)

16 Lobs, possibly, the things served at some get-togethers. (9)

18 One doesn't believe the way you can warm up a chicken! (7)

19 If there is such a person, he would have to travel a long way to set up shop with a Scotsman. (7)

20 Got someone out of jail, and jumped for joy! (6)

21 The name certainly didn't flatter the Egyptians, but it has romantic overtones, with a wagon, a fire, and such. (5)

23 Headless fear is always a mistake. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3046

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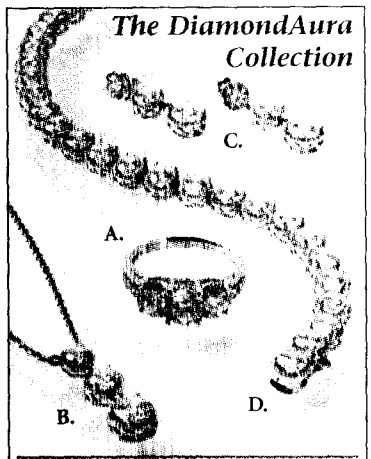

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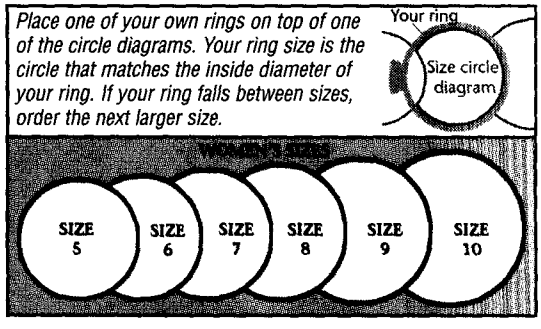

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